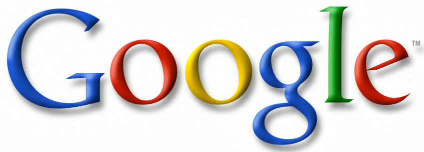
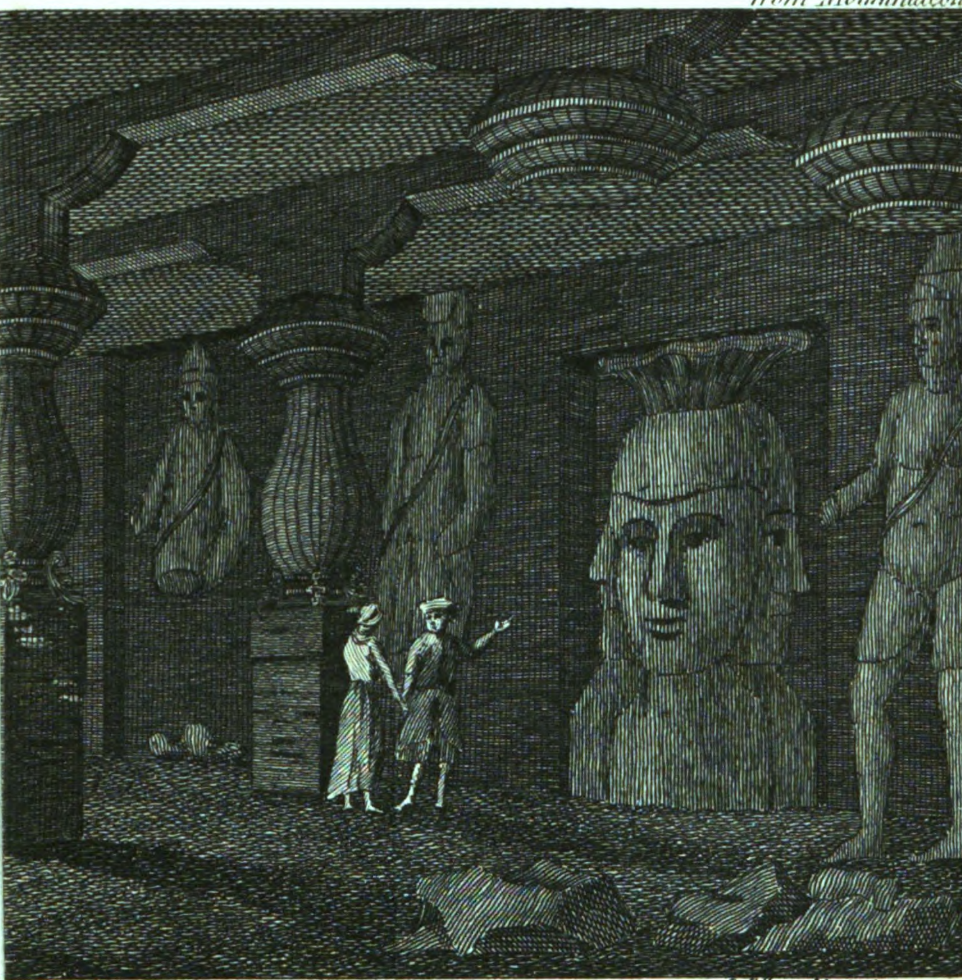
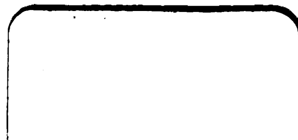




Indian antiquities

Thomas Maurice

AN ANCIENT PERSIAN FIRE-TEMPLE,



in which the **SACRED FLAME**, *kindled by the Rays of the* SUN, *was preserved incessantly Burning, & attended Day & Night by the Officiating Magi.*

from Dr. Hyde.

INDIAN ANTIQUITIES:

O R,

DISSERTATIONS,

RELATIVE TO

THE ANTIENT GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISIONS,
THE PURE SYSTEM OF PRIMEVAL THEOLOGY,
THE GRAND CODE OF CIVIL LAWS,
THE ORIGINAL FORM OF GOVERNMENT,
THE WIDELY-EXTENDED COMMERCE, AND
THE VARIOUS AND PROFOUND LITERATURE,

OF HINDOSTAN:

COMPARED, THROUGHOUT, WITH THE
RELIGION, LAWS, GOVERNMENT, and LITERATURE,

OF

PERSIA, EGYPT, AND GREECE,

THE WHOLE INTENDED
AS INTRODUCTORY TO, AND ILLUSTRATIVE OF,

THE HISTORY OF HINDOSTAN,
UPON A COMPREHENSIVE SCALE.

VOL. II.

Commencing the SURVEY of the THEOLOGY of HINDOSTAN; and considering that Theology, principally, in its physical and symbolical Allusions.

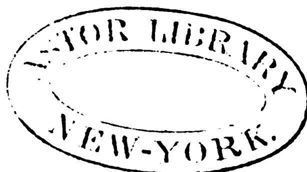
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1806.



DISSERTATION II.

THE

THEOLOGY

OF

HINDOSTAN:

COMPREHENDING THE HISTORY OF THE RISE, PROGRESS, AND DIFFUSION, OF SUPERSTITION, DURING THE MOST EARLY PERIODS, IN ASIA.

INTRODUCTORY PROSPECTUS

OF THE

CONTENTS

OF THE DISSERTATION OF THE

THEOLOGY OF HINDOSTAN.

THE extensive subject of the Indian Theology is considered in the following Dissertation under two general heads, the physical and symbolical, and the more pure and sublime. The antient physical theology of India is principally treated of in the former part of this Dissertation, which is divided into four sections; and, in the course of discussion, the Author has examined in what points the RELIGION of the ANTIENT INDIANS resembled, 1. That of the SCYTHIANS; 2. That of the ANTIENT PERSIANS; 3. That of the ANTIENT EGYPTIANS; and, 4. That of the EARLY GREEKS.

As the subject is complex, and consequently, as no very exact order of arrangement in the in-

 vestigation

vestigation of such a multitude of obscure and abstracted topics could be adhered to, he solicits the attention of the reader to the subjoined EPITOME of its contents. In the first section, retrospective on the antient religion of Scythia, and pointing out its analogy to that of India, the following points seemed to demand particular notice: Divine rites were first celebrated, and the sublime precepts of philosophy first taught, in the sacred solitude of GROVES and CAVERNS—the caverns of Salsette and Elephanta, undoubtedly stupendous subterraneous temples of the Deity—the particular rites of religion practised, and sciences taught, in those caverns, reserved for consideration under the second general head—the cave of Zoroaster, of Epictetus, of Pythagoras, and of Mohammed.—The astonishing extent in antient times of the consecrated groves of Scythia and of India—the idolatrous devotion practised in consecrated groves severely anathemised in holy writ—the sanguinary rites performed in those of Scythia—the very antient, but not the original, religion of India prove to be of a sanguinary cast—the NERAMEDHA JUG, or human sacrifice—the ASWAMMEDHA JUG, or horse sacrifice—GOMEDHA JUG, or sacrifice of the bull—the benevolent Hindoo and the bloodless law of BRAHMA attempted to be exculpated, from the *original* guilt of these sanguinary rites, by supposing an interpolation of the VEDAS, and a possible mixture of the barbarous customs of Scythia with those of India, during the early inter-

course

course of the two nations in the northern regions of Hindostan — that intercourse proved from various circumstances, but particularly from the impressive one of an antient conquest of Hindostan by Oguz Cawn, and recorded by Abulgazi, the Tartar historian. The subject considered in a more general point of view — the probable origin of all human sacrifices, that general belief which prevailed throughout the antient world in the agency of DEMONS, and in the frantic terrors inspired by SUPERSTITION — a description, from the Asiatic Researches and Mr Holwell, of CALLEE, the sable goddess of India, with an accompanying engraving of that formidable divinity, on whose baleful altars human victims were accustomed to be offered. — Human sacrifices seldom practised by the antients, but in cases of the greatest national emergency; as WAR, FAMINE, PESTILENCE, when the noblest possible victims were selected. — The various modes of devoting to death the miserable victim specified — particularly the more horrid rites used by the SCYTHIANS, as described by Herodotus — decapitation, inhumation, or burning, the general mode adopted in India — an instance of the former from the HEETOPADES — human sacrifices common at the funerals of the antient sovereigns of Scythia, or Tartary, and at those of the Indian rajahs — instances of the latter from Texeira, Anciennes Rélations, Tavernier, and Orme's Historical Fragments. Profound veneration both of the Indians and Scythians for the MANES of their

ANCESTORS —

ANCESTORS—exemplified from a passage in Herodotus, from another in the SACONTALA, and from Mr Wilkins's account of the ceremony of the STRADHA in the HEETOPADES.

In the second section, relative to the Persians, the very remarkable similitude subsisting in the leading principia of the religion of ZOROASTER and BRAHMA, the great legislators of the PERSIAN and Indian empires, is pointed out—particularly in their mutual belief in one SUPREME PRESIDING DEITY, governing the universe by inferior agents, and adored in Persia under the name of OROMASDES, and in India under that of BRAHME—in the parallel powers and similar office of the mediatorial MITHRA and the preserver VEESHNU—in those of the malignant AHRIMAN and the destroying SEEVA—in their account of the conflicts of the good and evil GENII, or DEWTAHS, contending for superiority in the creation—and in their kindred adoration of the SOLAR ORB and of FIRE. A general view of the mythology of the Hindoos, and an enumeration of the deities most conspicuous in that mythology. The SUN and ELEMENTARY FIRE considered in both countries as the most perfect emblems of Deity. Worship paid to the Sun, or SURYA, under the plea of adoring God in that orb, whose throne the Persians supposed to be seated in it, asserted to have been, in antient times, nearly as general in India as in Persia—proved to have been so from a very great variety of passages inserted in order, and extracted

from

from the VEDAS, the AYEEN AKBERY, and the three principal translations yet made from antient Sanscreet writings, viz. the GEETA, the HEETO-PADES, and the SAÇONTALA—the sect of the sun-worshippers at this day called SAURA—the account given, by Philostratus, of a most superb temple to the Sun—another from the Ayeen Akbery.—The Indian mysterious triliteral word AUM the same with the Egyptian OM, and both used to signify the solar fire.—Fire-temples mentioned in the same book to have flourished at Benares, Rai-Jird, and other places, in the time of the second Boodh, about a thousand years before Christ.—The Moon, or CHANDRA, a male deity in Hindostan—that very singular circumstance adduced in proof that India has not borrowed her mythology from Egypt, where the moon was a female divinity, adored under the name of ISIS, and whence the Greeks had their horned goddess Io.—The Indian Chandra drawn by antelopes—a RABBIT his symbol, as the CAT was of the Moon in Egypt, for a curious philosophical reason adduced from Plutarch.—FOUNTAINS sacred to the Moon in India—no less than 360 fountains consecrated to that orb at Kehrow, in Cashmeer—a circumstance pointed out as exceedingly remarkable, being the number of the days of the antient year.—The two supreme rajah families of Hindostan denominated SURYA-BANS and CHANDRA-BANS, or children of the sun and moon.—The elements personified and venerated under various names—AGNEE—VARUNA-PA-

VAN—

VAN—CREESHNA, the Indian Apollo—CARTICEYA, the Indian Mars—LACHSMEE, the Indian Ceres—SERASWATI, the Indian Minerva—CAMA, the Indian god of love—BHAVANI, the Indian Venus, &c. &c.—From adoring God in the sun, the Orientals proceeded by degrees to worship the planetary train—that worship promoted by their general cultivation of the science of astronomy.—An enlarged view taken of the antient SABIAN SUPERSTITION—its rapid progress over all the East—stigmatised in Job and the prophetic writings.—The rise and progress of astronomy in Asia—pursued with uncommon ardour in India—remains of stupendous astronomical instruments at the observatory of Benares and other places.—The Indians believed the stars to be exactly what the Phœnicians imagined their ZOPHESAMIN to be, ANIMATED INTELLIGENCES—of the former, evidence adduced from the Ayeen Akbery; of the latter, proof brought from Bishop Cumberland's Sanchoniatho.—Their greatest princes, legislators, and heroes, consequently exalted to the skies—representative images formed of them—those images by degrees adored instead of their originals.—Various animals, as their respective symbols, assigned to them by superstition—those animals venerated in their turn.—A retrospective survey of the deities and symbols of Egypt, and a short parallel, preparatory to one more extended, of those deities, and their symbols, with the Indian divinities and symbols.—The bull of OSIRIS—

the

the bull of SEEVA.—SERPENTS sacred in both countries—the EAGLE of JOVE—the GARUDA, or eagle of VEESHNU.—That survey extended to the temples of either country—the similitude astonishing, but reserved for full examination after the caverns of Salsette and Elephanta shall have been described.—The stupendous mysteries of superstition practised in them attempted to be investigated, and the profound arcana taught in them unfolded.—The Author enters upon that task, hitherto unaccomplished, and even unattempted, by the greatest Indian scholars and the most celebrated Asiatic travellers, with diffidence, blended with firmness, resulting from long and elaborate investigation into such books of antiquity as treat of CAVERNS, and such modern publications as best describe the GROTTOES of Egypt, the ROCKY SUBTERRANEOUS shrines of MITHRA, and the particular caverns in question.—The authors, in this part, more immediately consulted, are Porphyry, in his very curious and beautiful treatise de ANTRO NYMPHARUM; Mr Norden's Account, and elegant engravings, of the EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES; and Montfaucon and Dr Hyde on the MITHRATIC CAVES, RITES, and SYMBOLS.—Convinced that the mystery, considered by M. Anquetil Du Perron and M. Niebuhr as inscrutable, was only to be solved by a still closer examination of the principles of the ZEND and the VEDAS, by means of Dr Hyde and Sir William Jones, he attempts to investigate still deeper those sacred depositories

depositories of either religion.—He enters with some minuteness into the history of Zoroaster, the REFORMER, not the INVENTOR, of the Magian religion; he traces his "secret footsteps," and those of Darius Hystaspes, his royal patron, to the "woody solitudes" (as they are expressly called by Ammianus Marcellinus) of the venerable BRACHMANS in "Upper India," most probably the mountains of NAUGRACUT, and, again following the reformer back to Persia, after having been instructed in the most profouud and mysterious rites practised in their consecrated caverns, attentively marks his motions and observes his imitative conduct. From the invaluable treatise of Porphyry above-mentioned, the author is enabled to describe the particular ornaments of that lonely CAVE to which he afterwards retired in Media, "the astronomical symbols, and other mathematical apparatus," with which it was decorated: and, from his reviving, throughout Persia and Media, the veneration for fire, as well as his erecting the stupendous FIRE-TEMPLE at Balk, the author forms those conclusions which are submitted to the reader in the pages more immediately following.—The author supports his deductions, by a very curious passage, given at large by Origen, from Celsus, one of the most learned philosophers among the antients, concerning the SEVEN GATES, emblematical of the SEVEN PLANETS, erected in the MITHRATIC caverns, through which the sidereal metempsychosis was performed; and contrasts that passage with others

others cited from the Ayeen Akbery, in proof that there actually did exist, even so late as in Abul Fazil's time, among the rocky mountains in Upper Hindostan, EXCAVATIONS the most numerous and prodigious, and CARVED IDOLS of the most astonishing fabrication.

A general view is now taken of the sculptured imagery in the caverns of Elephanta, in which are exhibited, as well the substance of all the preceding descriptions, as the respective hypotheses formed from the survey of them by French and English travellers.—Those of Niebuhr by far the most correct and satisfactory—a more particular description of the Elephanta Pagoda; its style of architecture, dimensions, ornaments, recesses, cisterns for the water of purification, &c. &c.—The stupendous figure of the grand Indian triad of Deity, BRAHMA, VEESHNU, and SEEVA, minutely described and illustrated by an accurate engraving. —The other more remarkable statues successively delineated—Both the figures and their ornamental symbols plainly allusive to the theological notions at this day prevalent among the Hindoos.—The Hindoo nation divided into innumerable sects, but ultimately branched forth into two principal ones, that of VEESHNU and that of MAHADEO, or SEEVA, *i. e.* the worshippers of the Deity in his *preserving* and his *destroying* capacitiy.—The system of religion professed by the former, throughout this Dissertation, represented as the primitive, mild, benevolent, system of theology originally established in Hindostan.—

tan.—That professed by the latter full of terror and productive of the most licentious practices.—The indecent worship of SEEVA, his rites and symbols described with as much delicacy as possible, consistently with perspicuity. The LINGAM similar to the PHALLUS of the Greeks and the PRIAPUS of the Romans.—The sacred recess, or Sacellum of SEEVA.—An extended survey of that curious but degrading superstition.—The Lingam an emblem, in India, of the creative power—allotted as a symbol to Seeva, the DESTRUCTIVE POWER, upon that philosophical principle of the Brahmins, that "to *destroy* is only to *generate* and *re-produce* in another way."

The author now enters on the third section, containing the parallel of the INDIAN and EGYPTIAN systems of theology, in which that base species of worship forms the first distinguishing feature.—A description of the origin of Phallic worship in Egypt from Diodorus Siculus.—An instance exhibited, from Athenæus, of the splendour displayed at a Phallic festival, celebrated in Egypt by Ptolemy Philadelphus. The same with that of BAAL-PEOR in Scripture.—The Greeks borrowed and infamously refined upon it in their orgies of Bacchus.—The remarkable similitude of a fact recorded in a prophane writer, relative to the introduction of the PHALLICA at Athens, and a circumstance related in Scripture, in regard to the Philistines, who had captured and profaned the ark of God.—The former history in the prophane writer

writer no forgery from the latter, as asserted by Patrick and Bochart; but the mode of punishment and propitiation agreeably to the usage of Eastern countries.—Demonstrated to be so by a passage in Tavernier's Voyages in India, and another in the Sketches of Mr Crauford.—The author apologizes for going so largely into so disagreeable a subject, but affirms, that, without the explanation, the Indian system of theology, of which it engrosses so large a portion, would be utterly unintelligible.—He concludes it for the present, since the enormities promoted by the doctrine must be noticed in a succeeding part of the Dissertation, by displaying its atrociousness; and refers, for the genuine origin of such nefarious rites, to the principles and practices of that vitiated son of NOAH, the earliest idolater of the post-diluvian world, who led the first colony from Chaldea to the banks of the Nile.—That the most venerated IDOLS of India are the ATTRIBUTES OF GOD personified, or RAJAHS exalted, by their piety or bravery, to the rank of divinities, must be evident, from the general view of this Pantheon of India; since superior power could not be displayed in hieroglyphic representation more forcibly than by *a figure with numerous hands*, nor excelling wisdom more aptly delineated than by *a circle of heads*; since the radiated *crown of glory* naturally points out the *divinity* of the possessor, and the *serpent*, from his great vigour and revirescence, is equally in Egypt and in India the known emblem of *Deity*.

 The

The author, continuing the parallel between the theology of India and Egypt, proceeds to examine the more numerous, and scarcely less astonishing, excavations and hieroglyphic sculptures of CANARAH, in the island of Salsette — the most authentic accounts of them, those inserted in the seventh volume of the Archæologia, and in the preliminary discourse to Mr Anquetil's Zend-Avesta. — The island itself, and the external appearance of the caverns described. — The rocks themselves, in which they are hewn, bear strong marks of calcination. — Asserted by M. Anquetil to be hewn by the chissel into a pyramidal form. — Pyramids so constructed to resemble the figure of a flame of fire. — The external figure adduced as probable proof of the antient internal worship. — The caverns of Canarah, from their appearance, denominated by the natives "the city of Canarah." — A general description of the caverns. — The eminences of the rocks probably used by the Brahmins as observatories. — The architecture considered. — This pagoda, from its height, and from its arched roof, far more magnificent than that of Elephanta. — The tanks for ablution numerous, and the temple of SEEVA, with the PHALLUS, every where discernible. — Visible recesses for the lamps that, probably, were kept constantly burning. — The astonishing height of the GREAT ALTAR and magnitude of the colossal statues. — An attempt to display, in animated language, the stupendous magnificence and splendour of the Mithratic worship

ship—the origin of hieroglyphics.—The hieroglyphics of Egypt compared with those of India.—The signs of the Indian zodiac still visible on the cornices of the cavern-pagodas.—The great similarity, in many points, between the INDIANS and CHINESE.—The primeval legislator and, probably, the people of either country originally the same.—A MITHRATIC GROTTO discovered in Egypt and described by M. Savary.—A remarkable description, in Ezekiel, of a cavern, supposed by the author to be Mithratic, or rather the MYSTIC CELL of OSIRIS.—Osiris only the African appellative of Mithra.—A description of the MENSA ISIACA, or Bembine table, and the hieroglyphics engraved upon it, compared with those in Salsette and Elephanta.

After taking an extensive survey of the growth, progress, and extinction, of the Mithratic devotion, the author proceeds to examine the moral and philosophical doctrines, taught by the Brahmans in their cavern-recesses, which immediately leads to the fourth section on the physical and symbolical worship of India, and introduces the parallel of the Indian and Greek theology.—The Metempsychosis the most distinguished of those doctrines—falsely ascribed to Pythagoras—originated in India, and first promulgated in the GEETA of VYASA, the PLATO of India, many centuries before the birth of Pythagoras—extracts from the GEETA in proof of that assertion—various passages, in the SAÇONTALA and the HEETOPADES, strongly cor-

roborative of it, exhibited in order. — The doctrine of the Metempsychosis, or the notion of this life being a probationary state, productive in India of the most excrutiating and horrible penances, in order, by those penances, to obtain MOKSH, or supreme happiness. — A description of a YOGEE, in the act of penance, from the Sacontala. — The supreme happiness of BRAHME a state of divine absorption. — The doctrine of degenerate spirits migrating through various BOOBUNS, or spheres, and through animal bodies, to be traced to some corrupted tradition of the fallen angels. — The ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES of Greece, as described by Jamblicus and Proclus, and detailed by Warburton in the Divine Legation, compared with the mysterious rites practised in the caverns of India. — The genuine theology of India purer in its principles than any other professed in the world, except the Christian — justly stated to be so by Mr Hastings, in his elegant letter to Mr Nathaniel Smith, prefixed to the Geeta. — Some most sublime passages produced in proof, from that Episode, and from a translation of the BHAGAVAT, by Sir William Jones. — Certain passages in Scripture surprisingly consonant to these extracts. — Whether this might be derived from any possible connection with the Hebrews? — The fact itself, of any general intercourse between the two nations, denied — and the assertions of Postellus, Dr Hyde, and others, deriving BRAHMA from ABRAHAM, confuted. — Hamilton s account of a Jew-colony at Cranganore,

Cranganore, on the coast of Malabar, detailed and considered—possibly the remains of the ten tribes.—The VEDAS, however, written at a period far more antient than that dispersion, and consequently the primitive uncorrupted religion of Brahma could only be derived to them from NOAH, the MENU of the Sanscreet theologians, or else from his more immediate descendants of the righteous line of Shem, who first settled in India.

The author returns to the parallel of the MYSTERIES of India and Greece.—However pure the primeval theology of India, like all the systems of religion practised in every nation of the antient world, it gradually declined in its purity, through the venality, servility, or ambition, of successive priests.—Its progress in degeneracy traced from the age of VYASA to the present day.—The first cause of that degeneracy stated to be the symbolizing of the ATTRIBUTES of the Deity—in the veneration paid to brave and pious RAJAHS deceased, especially to those in whom the great Indian deity, Veeshnu, became incarnate—exemplified in the three RAMAS.—But, as the *amiable attributes* of God were personified and venerated by the Indians, so was that timid race induced, by terror, to deify the evil dæmons and their *horrible attributes.*—The walls of ELEPHANTA and SALSETTE crowded with images allusive to the majestic attributes of God and the magnified virtues of men.—The whole train of false deities likewise introduced into the Grecian mysteries.—The caverns of Elephanta

 and

and Salsette formed with dark ailes and winding passages, exactly resembling those in the temple of Ceres at Eleusis.—The PHALLUS of BACCHUS and the LINGAM of MAHADEO principal objects in the mystic shews.—The enormities consequent of the former gross system of worship in Greece and Rome, and of the latter in India, depicted.—The former from Herodotus and Livy, the latter from Renaudot and Tavernier.—The prostitutions at the temple of the Dea Syria, in honour of MYLITTA, similar to those of the WOMEN OF THE IDOL in the pagodas of India—particular account of the education and accomplishments of the latter.—The surrounding horrors that enveloped the ASPIRANT, and the final raptures that attended INITIATION, described from Apuleius, Dion Chrysostome, and Plato.—Some curious particulars, related by MEURSIUS, in regard to the NUMEROUS ABLUTIONS in the Grecian mysteries compared with those recounted in the Ayeen Akbery, as necessary to be undergone by the BRAHME CHAREE, or Brahmin of the first degree.—Mr Bryant's assertion, that the rites of ISIS and OSIRIS were originally instituted in memory of the deluge, considered and corroborated by the similar rites of the Brahmins.—The author pledges himself to prove, that there are Sanscreet records of a GENERAL DELUGE in Hindostan.—The account of the Grecian MYSTERIES concluded, with an enumeration of other parallel circumstances that took place in the celebration of those in India.

This

This chapter concludes with an extensive inquiry into that disputed topic, who were the fabricators of the caverns of SALSETTE and ELEPHANTA?—Whether the EGYPTIANS?—The subterraneous grottoes and caverns of the THEBAIS, with their sculptures, described from Pococke, Greaves, Norden, and Savary.—Whether the Æthiopians?—An account from Ludolphus of the Æthiopian rock-temples and their sculptures.—A curious passage apparently corroborative of the latter hypothesis from the ARCHÆOLOGIA.—Another remarkable passage adduced from Ezekiel, in proof that images, resembling those in the Indian caverns, decked with similar ornaments, and painted with vermillion, were in the most antient periods adored in CHALDÆA—the whole, consequently, relics of the antient prevailing SABIAN SUPERSTITION, or WORSHIP OF THE HOST OF HEAVEN, and fabricated by the antient CUTHITES.

The author, in the third volume, emerging from the gloom of SUBTERRANEOUS pagodas, introduces his readers into the splendid temples that adorn the surface of Hindostan—their height, extent, and the magnitude of the stones with which they are built, stupendous—instanced in the magnificent portico of CHILLAMBRUM, and the circumference of the walls of SERINGHAM.—The most antient pagodas erected in the form of pyramids, with only one door—and illuminated by lamps kept constantly burning—properly compared by MANDELSLO to caves.—The more modern pagodas

erected in a better style of architecture, and richly decorated within with gildings, carved work, and painting—without, entirely covered with sculptured animals.—The five most venerated pagodas of India, *viz.* that of JAGGERNAUT—that of BENARES—that of MATTRA—that of TRIPETTY—and that of SERINGHAM,—successively and minutely described from TAVERNIER and others.—An affecting story relative to the first defilement of Seringham by European armies.—The amazing revenues which these and other pagodas antiently enjoyed—40,000 souls supported by the revenues of SERINGHAM alone.—A more accurate survey of their internal sculptures, and a description of the monstrous idols adored in them.—EGYPT and INDIA seemed to have assembled in these pagodas the animals deemed more peculiarly sacred in each country—as, for instance, the MEMPHIAN BULL—the RAM, sacred to JUPITER—and the GOAT, to PAN—are seen blended with the APE of RAMA—the RHINOCEROS—and the ELEPHANT.

An extensive disquisition is now entered into on that disputed point, whether INDIA or EGYPT were the elder empire; and which nation first imparted its rites of superstition to the other?—The opinion of KIRCHER, relative to the settling in India of the Egyptian priests, driven from their country by the ravages of CAMBYSES, first considered.—The opinion of KÆMPFER, in regard to the great Indian saint, BUDDHA SAKIA, (in other words, the god

god BOODH)—the opinion of both those antiquarians highly probable, and apparently supported by that of Sir W. JONES, given in the Asiatic Researches, on the subject of BOODH—and on the great resemblance subsisting both in the name and the worship of the Egyptian ISIS and OSIRIS and the Indian ESWARA and ISA.—The result of SIR WILLIAM's inquiry concerning a colony of priests supposed to have settled at TIRHOOT, in North BAHAR—on the whole, favourable to such a supposition.—Mr CHAMBERS's account of the ruins of Mavalipuram—of the SOMMONACODOM, or stone-deity of the SIAMESE—and the superstition of BOODH.—Additional evidence of an early and familiar intercourse subsisting between the EGYPTIANS and INDIANS adduced.—The structure of their temples similar in point of massy solidity, magnitude, and extent.—A cursory comparison of a few of the principal structures of each country, preparatory to a more extensive parallel.—Some striking circumstances of national resemblance enumerated; as, first, in their mutual veneration of the sacred LOTOS.—A description of that flower from Herodotus, and a late traveller, M. Savary.—Secondly, in their early cultivation of the SUGAR-CANE.—Thirdly, in their antient, and once universal, diet, having consisted of VEGETABLES.—Fourthly, in their mutually possessing a SACRED SACERDOTAL LANGUAGE, called in India the DEVINAGARI.—Fifthly, in the division of the people into TRIBES or CASTS.—Sixthly in the numerous

ABLUTIONS

ABLUTIONS practised by both people.—And, finally in their universal reverence of the cow and the SERPENT.—The temples of Egypt, and their symbolical decorations, largely described from the most authentic and recent travellers.

The author, in the fourth and fifth volumes, investigates THE MORE PURE AND SUBLIME Theology of India, descended traditionally down to them from the venerable patriarchs, of which the following are the principal outlines:—A REVELATION was vouchsafed by his Creator to man, in a state of innocence in Paradise, concerning his nature, his will, and of the mode by which he would be worshipped.—The Deity, not a solitary, occult, and inaccessible, being, but perpetually present with his creatures. and in all his works.—The antient doctrine of DIVINE EMANATIONS adduced in proof of this assertion — that doctrine, the probable source of all idolatry, since it was God himself that was *first* adored in the SUN, the FIRE, and other elements — remains of this purer primitive theology remarkably apparent amidst a thousand superstitions in India. — General division of the Hindoos into four grand tribes, or casts — the tribe of BRAHMA — the tribe of KEHTREE — the tribe of BICE — the tribe of SOODER — the pure doctrines of Vyasa contained in the Vedas. — The Brahmins alone permitted to read the VEDAS — those Vedas explained to have been originally only three, and denominated the REIG Veda — the YAJUSH Veda — and the SAMAN Veda. — All three

three comprised under the name RIGYAJUHSAMA—and the fourth, or ATHARVA VEDA, proved from internal evidence to be far more modern.—The English, more than any other European nations, have contributed to remove the veil that antiently obscured the genuine religion of Brahma, inculcated in the Vedas, the Geeta, and other Sanscreet theological treatises.—An attempt of the Emperor Akber to penetrate that veil.—The affecting story of FEIZI, and his Brahmin preceptor.—An account of the Sanscreet language, extracted from Sir William Jones and Mr Halhed.—The author next enters upon the discussion of the PAGAN TRIADS OF DEITY, and particularly of the character and functions of BRAHMA, VEESHNU, and SEEVA, the grand Indian triad, of whom an accurate engraving forms the frontispiece of these volumes.—Any comparison of the Indian and Christian TRINITY an insult to the latter, from the immense disparity of the respective characters.—An extensive survey is now taken of the doctrine of the CHRISTIAN TRINITY.—That doctrine delivered down from the antient Patriarchs, and diffused over the East, during the migration and dispersion of their Hebrew posterity—demonstrated to be plainly revealed in the Old Testament, and to have been believed and taught by the JEWISH RABBI, long previous to the birth of PLATO and the coming of CHRIST.—The true origin of that rancour and contempt with which the Jews are inflamed against the MESSIAH unfolded.—

unfolded.—Some objections, urged by sceptical opponents againt the TRINITY, answered.—The Jews pay less deference to the WRITTEN than to the ORAL LAW, which they assert to have been delivered to Moses on Sinai.—An historical account of the celebrated code of the Jewish traditions collected by Rabbi JUDAH, THE HOLY, and called THE MISNA.—Of the two TALMUDS of JERUSALEM and BABYLON—and of the two TARGUMS of ONKELOS and JONATHAN.—The former TARGUM the most concise and pure paraphrase—the latter more diffuse, and supposed to have been interpolated.—A progressive view taken of the passages in Scripture, establishing some a PLURALITY, and others so express upon the PERSONAL AGENCY and DIVINE ATTRIBUTES of the MIMRA, or LOGOS, and the RUACH HAKKODESH, or HOLY SPIRIT, as plainly to evince a TRINITY of divine HYPOSTASES subsisting in the Godhead.—The preceding quotations illustrated, in regard to the OLD Testament, by a variety of extracts from the TARGUMS, and corroborated, in regard to the NEW, by an exhibition of similar sentiments and passages in the writings of PHILO-JUDÆUS, JOSEPHUS, and others.—The symbols of the Jews, illustrative of this doctrine, considered; but particularly the CHERUBIM—with an engraving of the CHERUBIM.—The sentiments of the antient Rabbies exhibited.—The manner in which the High Priest gave his solemn benediction to the people described, and the form in which he disposed

posed his fingers represented by an engraving, copied from Athanasius Kircher.—The mode in which they designated the incommunicable name of JEHOVAH, viz. by THREE JODS and a CIRCLE, emblematical of a TRINITY in Unity—that symbol exhibited.—In the antient mystical character supposed, like the DEVINAGARI character of India, to have been revealed BY ANGELS, the JOD, the first initial letter of that name, accompanied with a TRIANGLE—very remarkable, because, according to Kircher, the EGYPTIAN symbol of the Deity, or NUMEN TRIPLEX, was a TRIANGLE.—The three persons in the DIVINE ESSENCE compared by those Rabbies to the three collateral branches of the Hebrew letter SCHIN.—The letter therefore conspicuously engraved on the antient PHYLACTERY, which the Jews, according to the divine command, wore on the head.—Engravings, displaying these various symbols, in the course of the inquiry, presented to the reader.—An account of the famous book of ZOHAR, and of the SEPHIR JETZIRAH, or book of Abraham.—A review of the Pagan TRINITIES.—The ORACLES of ZOROASTER considered—contain internal evidence that they are not wholly spurious—that assertion proved in a short comparison of the theoretic system of theology laid down in those oracles, and the practical worship of the Chaldæans, Persians, and Indians.—The THREE PRINCIPLES mentioned in the Zoroastrian or Chaldaic Oracles, the most early corruption of the doctrine of the Hebrew Trinity.

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—The Persian Triad of Deity, OROMASDES, MITHRAS, ARIMANIUS; or, rather, the three-fold power of the God MITHRA, thence called TRIPLASIOS, to be referred to the same origin.—The remains of this doctrine remarkably apparent in India, not only in the triad BRAHMA, VEESHNU, and SEEVA, but in various symbolic characters of that mystic Triad recapitulated and exhibited.—An account of a medal found in Siberia, on which is engraved the figure of the TRIUNE GOD, accompanied with a description in Tangutian characters, explained by Colonel Grant, and with an engraving of it from Parson's Remains of Japhet.—The Peruvians described by Acosta as worshipping an idol denominated TANGA-TANGA, which they assert to mean ONE IN THREE and THREE IN ONE.—A short inquiry entered into, by what channel a doctrine, so improbable to have been the fabrication of mere human reason as that of a Trinity in Unity, could be propagated among a nation so remote from the Hebrews as the Peruvians.—The great THREE-HEADED IDOL of Japan described from Kæmpfer—an engraving of that idol from the same author.—The Trinity of Egypt considered—represented by a GLOBE, a WING, and a SERPENT.—Its meaning investigated, and an engraving of it exhibited, which was copied from the front of the ruins of LUXOR, by Mr Norden, in his Antiquities of Egypt.—An account of the TRINITY of divine persons, in the Hymns attributed to Orpheus.—The doctrines relative to a

Trinity

Trinity taught by PYTHAGORAS, PARMENIDES, and PLATO. — A conclusive retrospect on the subject, and a general recapitulation of the principal arguments adduced in proof of the original position, that this doctrine *was* originally revealed from heaven to the ancestors of the human race, known to the Hebrew patriarchs; and propagated by themselves and their posterity, during their various migrations and dispersions throughout the world. — A summary account of the opinions at present entertained by the Jews, relative to the expected advent of the MESSIAH.—Calculations formerly made concerning that event from the course of the stars.—Those calculations now forbidden by a most tremendous imprecation, in the GEMARA, that the bowels of the calculator may burst asunder. — The execration, how evaded by ABARBANEL, the great commentator on the Pentateuch.— His own extravagant assertions, with respect to the constellations, and his particular computation of the times of the Messiah proved to be false by the event.—The monstrous conceptions of the modern Jews, relative to the great feast at which the second Messiah, after the overthrow of the enemies of the Jews, is to entertain the whole assembled race of Judah, from Abraham downwards, in the renovated city of Jerusalem, (according to the Rabbies cited by Basnage,) with the flesh of the female LEVIATHAN, salted by God from the beginning of time, and preserved as an exquisite relish for that banquet of his SON.—They are

also

also to be regaled with the female BEHEMOTH, which eats the grass of 1000 mountains in one day, according to Psalm l. 10; and with the flesh of the stupendous bird ZIZ, or BARIUCHNE, whose extended wings obscured the sun.—Wine made of the grapes of Paradise, and treasured in the vault of Adam, also reserved for that feast.—The author apologises, and gives his reasons for mentioning these rabbinical vagaries, viz. to shew their perversion of Scripture texts, and their sensual and carnal notions of what is purely spiritual; among which may be numbered, that most baleful spring of all their calamities, the persuasion that the MESSIAH IS YET TO COME, A MIGHTY TEMPORAL PRINCE.

The author now returns to the investigation of the points remaining to be considered in the THEOLOGY of the Brahmins.—According to Diodorus Siculus, the antient Brachmans acknowledged all their civil and ecclesiastical institutions to be derived from DIONYSIUS.—An inquiry commenced concerning the true INDIAN BACCHUS.—The Indians, in their relations to the Greeks, to flatter their conquerors, artfully applied the adventures of their great HERO and GOD RAMA to the Grecian Dionysius.—The true Dionysius of antiquity asserted to be no other than NOAH—and, probably, the first person who led a colony to India from Armenia, after the flood, was an immediate descendant of the more virtuous line of that patriarch, who established the original, mild, and patriarchal, form of government

government which originally prevailed in India, and of which many traces to this day remain.— The early and acknowledged maturity of the sciences in India, and other perplexing phænomena relative to that country, attempted to be accounted for, by supposing, with Mr Bryant, that colony to have migrated, not from Shinaar, but from Ararat, previous to the erection of Babel and the confusion of tongues.—The CUTHITES ejected by the vengeance of God from SHINAAR, and defeated by the confederated sovereigns of the line of Shem, invade India in various directions—from the North by the pass of Hurdwar—and from the regions on the western frontiers, called from them INDO-SCYTHIA.—The former established themselves on the Ganges, and formed that vast eastern empire so celebrated in Sanscreet histories, of which the city of OWDH was the capital, and the Hindoo god and prophet RAMA, the son of CUSH, the first potent sovereign—the latter founded the equally-renowned empire of the West, and, possibly, the capital of that empire was either HASTINAPOOR, or BRAHMINABAD.—The author assigns his reasons for adopting this hypothesis, which are founded on the martial and enterprising character of the SONS OF HAM—their attachment to the sacred gloom of CAVERNS—and the acknowledged skill in architecture of that race, who erected the stupendous pyramids of Egypt.—He urges that this hypothesis accounts for the origin of the TWO GREAT SECTS of India, and their varying theology

—for the veneration which the Indians entertain for cows and SERPENTS, the predominant superstition of Egypt—their adoration of the SOLAR ORB—their worship of the PHALLUS—and their sanguinary sacrifices of MEN and BEASTS.—The Dissertations of Sir William Jones, and others, on the Indians, very decisively point towards some such hypothesis as this—since they evince, that, at some remote period, there has been a general convulsion in the civil and religious constitution of India—that a great and remarkable change has taken place in the manners and opinions of the Hindoos—and, since the mystery of the great battle of the MAHABBARAT, in which sons and brothers fell in a general and promiscuous carnage, can only be resolved by such a supposition.—The true character of the venerable Brachmans of antiquity is finally delineated and the severe tortures are also enumerated which they underwent in their progress through the CHAR ASHERUM, or FOUR DEGREES of probation; tortures which they bore with a constancy and with a fortitude worthy of a more enlightened religion and more animating rewards.

END OF THE INTRODUCTORY PROSPECTUS OF THE PRINCIPAL SUBJECTS DISCUSSED IN THE DISSERTATION ON THE THEOLOGY OF HINDOSTAN.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

CONCERNING THE PHYSICAL AND SYMBOLICAL THEOLOGY OF THE ANTIENT INDIANS; IN WHAT POINTS IT RESEMBLED THAT OF THE SCYTHIANS,—THAT OF THE ANTIENT PERSIANS,—THAT OF THE ANTIENT EGYPTIANS,—AND THAT OF THE EARLY GREEKS.

SECTION I.

Pointing out the Analogy existing between the antient Theology of India and Scythia; particularly in respect to the superstitious Rites practised, by both Nations, in consecrated Groves and Caverns, and their sanguinary Sacrifices of Men and Beasts.

I AM now about to enter upon a subject, of which the MAGNITUDE and INTRICACY fill me with awe and apprehension. In the comprehensive view which it is my intention

 to

to take of this important and disputed topic, the Indian Theology, so many various and complicated circumstances press for consideration, that I am almost at a loss from what point to commence the wide survey. If a less degree of order and connection than I could wish should appear in my reflections on this head of the RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES, maintained from age to age by the Hindoos, the reader will, I hope, candidly impute the defect to the obscure, the extensive, and complex, nature of the subject under examination.

During the intercourse which the antients maintained with India, by means of the conquests of ALEXANDER, and the commerce afterwards carried on with the nations inhabiting the Peninsula, they were able to obtain a partial insight into their theological institutions, which, as far as known to them, have been faithfully transmitted to posterity, in the writings of Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, and Pliny. Some of the outlines which they have drawn are indeed just and striking; but the impenetrable veil which the craft of the INDIAN, as well as of the EGYPTIAN, priesthood had thrown over the more solemn mysteries of the religion they professed, precluded any very intimate acquaintance with its principles. Of the genuine

nuine precepts and the more sublime doctrines of BRAHMA, whether considered as a theologist or as a legislator, as they are now known to us through the GEETA and the INSTITUTES OF MENU, the antients were as entirely ignorant, as even the European conquerors of India themselves, to their disgrace, continued, till near the close of the eighteenth century, when Sir William Jones, Mr Halhed, and Mr Wilkins, made the most indefatigable and succesful efforts to investigate them. To the laborious researches of these gentlemen is the public indebted for all the original knowledge of which they are now in possession, both in regard to the true principles of the theology of the Hindoos contained in the VEDAS,* and the profound wisdom and equity displayed in the code of their laws.

The gloomy CAVERN and the consecrated GROVE bore witness to the earliest devotions of mankind. The deep shade, the solemn silence, the profound solitude, of such places, inspired the contemplative soul with a kind of holy horror and cherished in it the seeds of virtue and religion. The same circumstances were

* The four sacred volumes of India, so denominated from VEDA, a SANSCREET root, signifying, TO KNOW.

found equally favourable to the propagation of science, and tended to impress upon the minds of the hearers the awful dictates of truth and wisdom.[1] The BRAHMINS of Asia and the DRUIDS of Europe were therefore constantly to be found in the recesses of the sacred grotto and in the bosom of the embowering forest. Here, undisturbed, they chanted forth their devout orisons to their Creator; here they practised the severities of bodily mortification; here they taught mankind the vanity of wealth, the folly of power, and the madness of ambition. All Asia beside cannot boast such august and admirable monuments of antiquity as the caverns of SALSETTE and ELEPHANTA and the sculptures that adorn them. I consider them, not only as stupendous subterraneous temples of the Deity, but as occasionally used by the Brahmins for inculcating the profoundest arcana of those sciences, for which they were so widely celebrated throughout the East. What were the religious rites practised and what the sciences taught in those caverns, I shall reserve for ample investigation under the second general head. In the mean time it may be observed, that, from the deep obscurity of caverns and forests, have, in every age, issued the light of philosophy and the beams of religion. ZOROASTER, or ZER-

DURST,

DUSHT, the great reformer of the sect of the Persian Magi, between whose doctrines and those of BRAHMA I shall hereafter, in many points, trace a striking resemblance, amidst the gloom of a cavern, composed his celebrated system of theological institutions, which filled twelve volumes, each consisting of a hundred skins of vellum, and was called the ZEND-AVESTA.* The renowned philosophers, Epictetus and Pythagoras, who was himself the scholar of Zoroaster,† sought wisdom in the solitary cell. Even the venerable prophets of the true religion took up their abode in the solitudes of the desert; and the herald of the MESSIAH, whose meat was the locusts and the wild honey which those solitudes produced, declares himself to be "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." In later ages, the crafty impostor Mohammed, in order more effectually to establish the pretended sanctity of his character, thought it necessaay to shun the society of men, and retired to fabricate his daring impositions

* Dr Prideaux, who, next to the learned Hyde, has given the most ample account of Zoroaster and his tenets, informs us, that the word *Zend-avesta* signifies *Fire-kindler*. See Prideaux's Connections, vol. i. p. 317, oct. edit. 1724. See also Dr Hyde, Hist. Vet. Relig. Pers, cap. xxvi, p. 330. Edit. Oxon. 1760.

† Prideaux's Connections, vol. i. p. 224.

in "a lonely cave, amidst the recesses of Mount Hara."

Groves, sacred to religion and science, were famous over all the East. Abraham is said to have "planted a *grove* in Beersheba, and to have called there upon the name of the Lord."* But his degenerate posterity afterwards prostituted the *hallowed grove* to purposes of the basest devotion. They were upbraided, by the prophets, with burning incense and offering oblations, under every oak and green tree, to the gods of the Phœnicians and the neighbouring nations. It was against the *groves*, polluted by such idolatrous sacrifices, that the most awful anathemas of offended heaven were, in holy writ, perpetually denounced. Amidst the ardours of a torrid clime, those sylvan solitudes could not fail to afford the most grateful retreat; but, according to the united attestations of the antients, their inmost recesses were often polluted by the most dreadful rites. The Scythians, also, who never erected temples to the Deity, in their colder regions, celebrated the mysteries of their sanguinary superstition under *groves* of oak of astonishing extent and of the profoundest gloom. Some of those oaks,

* Gen. xxi. verse 23.

according to Keysler,* who has diligently investigated the antiquities of that northern race, and traced them among their descendants in Europe, were of a prodigious magnitude, and were always plentifully sprinkled with the blood of the expiring victims. However vast the dimensions of those oaks might have been, it is hardly possible they could have exceeded in size that wonderful Indian tree under which we are told, by the antients,† that four hundred horsemen might take shelter at once. This was doubtless the sacred BATTA, or banian-tree of the moderns, under the ample shade of whose radicating branches, Tavernier informs us, that the Hindoos of modern times delight to reside, to dress their victuals, and erect their pagods. Of one of this species, growing near Surat, he has given an engraving,‡ with a number of FAKEERS, the gymnosophists of the antients, in every dreadful posture of penance and distortion. The Druids of Gaul and of

* See Keysler's Antiquitates Septentrionales, Dissert. 3.

† Consult Strabo, lib. xv. p. 659, and Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. xii. c. iv. in regard to the immense bulk of the Indian trees, especially of the FICUS INDICA.

‡ See the engraving, Voyage de Tavernier, tom. iv. p. 118, edit. à Rouen, 1713, and p. 166 of the London folio edit.

Mona,

Mona, the immediate descendants of the antient CELTO-SCYTHIANS, retained the same veneration for groves of oak; and, according to the Roman historians, in the early periods of that empire, practised the same tremendous species of superstition, devoting to the gods, with many horrid ceremonies, the unhappy captives* taken in war. Lucan,† describing the Massilian grove of the former, enumerates circumstances which make us shudder as we read,—the gloomy, damp, impenetrable, grove, where no sylvan deity ever resided, no bird ever sang, no beast ever slumbered, no gentle zephyr ever played, nor even the lightning could rend a passage. It was a place of blood and horror, abounding with altars reeking with the gore of human victims, by which all the

* *Victima* seems to be derived *à victo,* the person conquered in battle, and therefore doomed to sacrifice.

† Lucus erat, longo nunquam violatus ab ævo,
Obscurum cingens connexis aëra ramis.—
Hunc non ruricolæ Panes, nemorumque potentes
Sylvani Nymphæque tenent, sed barbara ritu
Sacra deum, structæ sacris feralibus aræ;
Omnis et humanis lustrata cruoribus arbos.
Illis et volucres metuunt insistere ramis,
Et lustris recubare feræ: nec ventus in illas
Incubuit silvas, excussaque nubibus atris
Fulgura . . . . .

Lucan's Pharsalia, lib. iii. *p.* 400. *& seq.*

trunks

trunks of the lofty and eternal oaks, which composed it, were dyed of a crimson colour; a black and turbid water rolled through it in many a winding stream: no soul ever entered the forlorn abode, except the priest, who, at noon and at midnight, with paleness on his brow and tremor in his step, went thither to celebrate the horrible mysteries in honour of that terrific deity whose aspect he dreaded more than death to behold.

That a country, like India, whose JUNGLES, at this period of general cultivation, form in some places an impervious barrier, and whose sages have ever affected both the austerity and seclusion of anchorites, should once have abounded with the noblest groves, calculated for every purpose of superstition as well as instruction, is a supposition neither irrational nor incredible. Indeed, many very extensive and beautiful groves* yet remain in Hindostan, though now applied to other purposes. Whatever may have been urged in favour of the high antiquity of BENARES, as the original seat of Hindoo literature, and the most favoured residence of the Brahmins, it seems to be a fact,

* In the SACONTALA, an antient Indian drama, the Brahmins are represented as residing in the bosom of a deep forest.

authenticated

authenticated by the evidence of the Ayeen Akbery,* and corroborated in some degree by the Asiatic Researches,† that TIRHOOT, a city situated in the north of Bahar, possesses a prior claim to that honour; for, it is said, "*from old time*, to have been the residence of Hindoo learning;" and those delightful groves of orange-trees mentioned before, which extended no less than thirty cose, might well contribute to render it the Athens of Hindostan. It will be remembered, that Birmh-Gaya, a place of worship, so called from being consecrated to Brahma, is in that subah, and that Mr Chambers, quoting Ferishta, says, that the province of Bahar was thus denominated, "because it was formerly so full of Brahmins, as to be, as it were, one great *seminary of learning*," as the word imports. NAUGRACUT, situated on the range of mountains of the same name, to the north of Lahore, is also mentioned, by antient travellers, as having a celebrated college of Hindoo learning, groves of vast extent, and a most frequented and splendid chapel of Hindoo devotion, the very floor of which, according to Mandelsloe,‡ was covered with plates of gold.

* Ayeen Akbery, vol. ii. p. 32.

† Asiatic Researches, vol. i. p. 163.

‡ Mandelsloe apud Harris, vol. ii. p. 120.

gold. The rites, however, were somewhat of a sanguinary kind: for, to gain the smile of MATTA, the monstrous idol adored there, the infatuated devotees cut out their tongues, which, according to Abul Fazil,* miraculously grew again in the space of two or three days.

It has, indeed, been asserted, and the assertion is supported by the evidence of tradition, that the very early inhabitants of India were neither so gentle in their manners nor so guiltless in their oblations as are the modern, but that they delighted in the effusion of sacrificial blood as much as their progeny abhor and avoid it. It has been asserted, that not only BESTIAL, but even HUMAN, sacrifices were common among them, and that the vestiges of this sanguinary superstition are still evident in frequent instances of voluntary suicide, and particularly in the inhuman practice, so common throughout India, of women burning themselves with their deceased husbands; a practice which is still encouraged by the Brahmins, and which all the authority of Mohammedan and European governors cannot effectually check. The truth of this assertion is, indeed, too well authenticated both by antient and modern writers; and, though

* Ayeen Akbery, vol. ii. p. 133.

Mr

Mr Holwell,* arguing from the general mildness of the Hindoo character and the benevolent principles of the Brahmin religion, strenuously denies the existence of those bloody rites, yet, unaccountable as it may appear, the VEDAS† themselves enjoin the oblation, on some occasions, of a MAN, a BULL, and a HORSE, under the names of NERAMEDHA, GOMEDHA, and ASWAMEDHA. In the Ayeen Akbery,‡ it is expressly said, that, at a particular period, on account of the number of animals which were at that time sacrificed in Juggen, (divine worship,) "the Almighty appeared upon earth, under a human form, to convince mankind of the wickedness of that custom, and that he lived a hundred years." Strabo,§ indeed, and Arrian,|| unite in affirming, that sacrifices of animals were antiently practised in India, and specify both the bull and the horse, which were obliged to be coal-black, as being of a more rare and valuable kind. The former adds, that the throats of

* Holwell, part ii. p. 84.

† Asiat. Research. vol. i. p. 265.

‡ Ayeen Akbery, vol. iii. p. 241.

§ Strabo, lib. xv. p. 710.

|| Arrian in Indicis.

the

the victims were not cut, for fear of rendering the sacrifice imperfect by spilling the blood of the animal, but that they were strangled. This mode of depriving the animal of life, if we are at all to credit the account, was more probably adopted to avoid the defilement of that blood, but I can by no means find this particular confirmed, either in the Asiatic Researches, which expressly say, these ceremonies *were stained with blood*, nor in that part of the Ayeen Akbery which records the history of the sacrificial rites of India. The latter book mentions, in opposition to what Strabo asserts concerning the coal-black steed, that the ASWAMEDHA JUG, or horse-sacrifice, was only properly performed when the animal was white with a *black right ear*; which, however, being an object equally rare, will serve to prove the validity of that valuable author's general information.

However incredible to some persons may appear the assertion of the most sanguinary rites having been at one time generally practised in Hindostan, the existence of such rites is rendered exceedingly probable by the following short chapter in the Ayeen Akbery, which Abul Fazil, who had the best opportunities of investigating the fact, would not have inserted

unless

unless founded in truth. It is entitled,* MERITORIOUS Kinds of SUICIDE. There are five in number for the choice of the voluntary victim. "1. Starving. 2. Covering himself with cow-dung, setting it on fire, and consuming himself therein. 3. Burying himself with snow. (This practice must have been peculiar to the northern regions.) 4. At the extremity of Bengal, where the Ganges discharges itself into the sea through a thousand channels, he goes into the water, enumerates his sins, and prays till the alligators come and devour him. 5. Cutting his throat at Allahabad, at the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna." The legislator, who could denominate these horrid acts of self-murder *meritorious*, could not be of a very mild or benevolent disposition, but, on the contrary, must have been a gloomy bigot or blood-thirsty tyrant. The sacrifice which CALANUS made of himself on the funeral pile before the whole assembled army of Alexander; the similar devotion of himself to the flames, at Athens, of the venerable Brachman ZARMANOCHAGAS, who attended the embassy sent by Porus to Augustus, and whose epitaph, dictated by himself, expressly

* Ayeen Akbery, vol. iii. p. 274.

asserted, that he relinquished life in conformity to a custom prevailing among his countrymen; that, mentioned in a former chapter, of the unsuccessful but warlike sovereign of Lahore; and the anthenticated narratives, in times comparatively modern, of the sacrifice or inhumation, together with the corpse of the monarch, of the principal slaves and most beloved women* of the sovereigns of the Peninsula; these collective considerations incontestably prove how much-accustomed the Indians formerly were to the rite of human sacrifices, and in how late periods they continued to practise that enormity, either constrained in regard to others or voluntary in respect to themselves. The dreadful rite, as a public national sacrifice, ceased, we are told,† when the ninth great incarnation of VEESHNU, in the form of the god BOODH, above-mentioned, took place, about 1000 years before Christ, when that benign and compassionate deity abolished the dis-

* Mention is made, in Harris's Voyages, (vol. i. p. 282,) of the death of a king at Tanjore, at whose funeral no less than three hundred of his concubines at once leaped into the flames. Texeira, in page 9 of his Persian History, declares, that, when he was in India, "four hundred women burned themselves at the funeral of the Naique of Madura."

† Asiat. Research. vol. i. p. 265.

graceful custom, and ordained, in its place, the more simple and innocent oblation of fruits, flowers, and incense.

I am inclined to believe, that both this practice, and the barbarous custom of devoting to death the affectionate wife on the funeral-pile of her deceased husband, (doctrines so opposite to the general precepts of Brahma, which cherished in the bosom of his votaries the most enlarged benevolence, and extended that benevolence even to brutes,) derived its origin, in part, from some early but forgotten connection with the neighbouring ferocious and war-trained tribes of SCYTHIA. I have ventured to differ from Major Rennel, in deriving the national appellation of Cathæi, which the Greeks, doubtless from some resembling sound heard by them, gave to the most warlike people of northern India, from Kathay, or, if written Cuthæi, from Scuthe, or Scythe; whereas, that gentleman, finding the name written Katheri in Diodorus Siculus, with perhaps greater propriety, would understand by them the Kattry, or Raja-pout, tribe, and quotes a passage from Thevenot in corroboration of the idea. However, his own conjecture, that the tribe of NOMURDY, inhabiting the banks of the Indus, may probably be the descendants

of

of the SCYTHIAN NOMADES, and a relation which I find in Abulgazi's History * of the Tartars, concerning a very antient conquest of the northern regions of Hindostan by OGUS KHAN, one of their most early emperors, an account of which will be hereafter given in its proper place, induces me still, with every proper diffidence, to adhere to that opinion. But there antiently existed a race of people who bordered still nearer to the northern frontiers of India, and whose manners and habits, Herodotus † acquaints us, greatly resembled those of the Scythians, I mean the MASSAGETÆ, inhabiting, according to Sir W. Jones, ‡ the territory by the moderns called BADAKSHAN, from whose primitive practices, however now altogether relinquished, the Indians might have borrowed their less humane principles and customs. I consider the GETES, upon whom Timur is said to have made war, as the direct descendants of this antient tribe, and am induced to do so by Sheriffedin's description of them, as a warlike race of moun-

* See Abulgazi's Hist. of the Tart. vol. i. p. 17.

† Herodotus, lib. i. p. 99, edit. Stephani, 1592, which is the edition quoted throughout this work.

‡ Description of Asia, p. 21, prefixed to Nadir Shah.

 taineers.

taineers.* These GETES, Major Rennel † supposes to be the same people with the modern JAUTS, who, at this day, make so conspicuous a figure in Hindostan. It is not from attachment to system, but from a wish to vindicate the mild and benevolent progeny of Hindostan from the inconsistency of a conduct so entirely repugnant to their genius, and to the general sentiments and practice at this day prevailing throughout the country, except among the war-tribe only, that I have so far pressed this argument, in the hope of inducing a persuasion that so nefarious a practice might *possibly* not have originated among them, but was a dreadful exotic, imported during their connection with their neighbours of the more barborous north. The sanguinary usage might have been universally adopted only in times prior to the institution of their first great legislator, whosoever, in reality, that legislator might have been. If, however, we allow, what, after all, I fear must be allowed, that it was prescribed by MENU himself; to avoid absurdity, we must suppose, that, to prevent too violent a shock being given to religious

* Life of Timur Bec, vol. ii. p. 46.

† Major Rennel's Memoir, p. 119, second edition.

prejudices

prejudices so deeply rooted, or not venturing to run the risk of abolishing at once a custom so generally practised, he permitted it only on some particular emergencies; but, in general, and probably with a view to remove for ever the baneful impression from their minds, throughout his whole voluminous code,* inculcated the most beneficent affection to their fellow-creatures; and, to prevent the effusion of bestial blood, which we know was so prodigally shed by the most antient nations, established the humane, but fanciful, and since corrupted, doctrine of the Metempsychosis.

The SCYTHIANS, however, were not their only neighbours who were, in a notorious degree, guilty of the enormity of human sacrifices. If Herodotus may be credited, (and, concerning these remote periods of the world, even Herodotus, the most respectable historian of antiquity, or rather the venerable father of all history, may be sometimes fallible,) the antient PERSIANS † sacrificed human victims; and, in particular, he informs us, that,

* The four VEDAS together compose eleven folio volumes, which are now in the possession of Colonel Polier, who was for many years resident at the court of DELHI.

† Herodoti, lib. vii. p. 477, edit. Steph.

in the expedition of Xerxes into Greece, arriving at a place in the country of the Edonians, called the Nine Ways, the Magi took *nine* of the sons and daughters of the inhabitants, and *buried them alive*;* for, he adds, to these rites of inhumation the Persians are accustomed. To corroborate the truth of a circumstance which he suspected might not be credited by his readers, he, in the very next sentence, acquaints us, he had heard, that, when Amestris, wife of Xerxes, had happily attained to mature age, with confirmed health, she ordered fourteen children, of the noblest families of Persia, to *be buried alive*, in grateful sacrifice to the subterraneous deity.† This practice, however, was equally contrary to the precepts of Zoroaster as to the general tenor of the VEDAS. How shall we account for its introduction into those nations, or, indeed, of so horrid a rite into any nation? For, in fact, all the most antient nations of the earth practised it; the Phœnicians, the Chaldæans, the Egyptians, and, it is too probable, the Jews themselves, who were forbidden, by the most dreadful penalties, to cause their sons and their

* Ζώοντας κατώρυσσον.

† Plutarch confirms the same fact; but, instead of fourteen, says Amestris offered up the hallowed number of nine victims to Pluto.

daughters,

daughters, like the Chaldæans, to pass through the fire to Moloch, the Phœnician diety. The abomination descended from CAIN, *the first murderer*, to all his posterity; and we must consider the command of Jehovah to Abraham, first to sacrifice his only son, and then, by the voice of an angel from heaven, ordering him to forbear and to sacrifice a RAM in his place, as a strong decisive mark of his disapprobation, and as an express prohibition of the continuance among men of so nefarious and detestable a practice.

The ASWAMEDHA JUG, or horse-sacrifice, the Indians, doubtless, derived from the Persians, among whom, according to the whole stream of classic antiquity, the *horse* was in a peculiar manner sacred to the sun. In their pompous sacrifices to that deity, a radiant car, glittering with gold and diamonds, and drawn by *white horses*, in imitation of those ætherial coursers which they imagined rapidly conveyed the orb of day in its progress through the expanse of heaven, constantly formed a part of the procession. It was preceded by a train of led horses, sumptuously arrayed, and of uncommon beauty and magnitude, who were the destined victims of that splendid superstition. The Massagetæ, too, that warlike race, who,

according to Strabo,* opposed the arms of the great Cyrus, adored the SUN and sacrificed horses to that deity, Horses, however, were not only sacrificed to the sun in the antient æras of the Persian empire; for, the Persians (who, according to the more authentic representation of Dr Hyde, venerated all the elements of nature) paid likewise a religious homage to water: and Herodotus, in the page cited before, says, that, on the arrival of the army at the Strymon, the Magi sacrificed nine *white horses* to that river, into which they drew them, with a quantity of rich aromatics. I may in this place remark, that, as there seems to be the most solid ground for supposing that the Indians owe to their early connection with Persia their profound reverence for fire, so it is not improbable that their veneration for great rivers, as, for instance, the Ganges and the Kistnah,† whose streams they account sacred, may be derived from the same fruitful source. I was not able to oblige my readers with any

* Strabo, lib. xi. p. 487, edit. Basil. The edition referred to throughout.

† I particularly mention these rivers, because two of the most considerable; but the Ayeen Akbery, vol. iii. p. 254, enumerates no less than twenty-eight rivers which are held sacred by the Hindoos.

very

very particular account of the Neramedha, or human sacrifice, as antiently practised in India; (though I shall hereafter give an instance of one from the HEETOPADES;) but, on that at present under consideration, some rays of light have been thrown in a translation by Mr Halhed from an old Persian author, who published in that language a Hindoo commentary upon the Vedas, in which this rite, as a symbol, is explained. The whole account is wild and romantic in the extreme, and Mr Halhed does not absolutely vouch for its authenticity; however, till more genuine sources of information are opened to us, we must make the most of those in our possession. The Aswamedha Jug, we are told in that book, does not merely consist in bringing a horse and sacrificing him, bu the rite is also to be taken in a mystic signification. "The horse, so sacrificed, is in the place of the sacrificer, bears his sins with him into the wilderness into which he is turned adrift, (for, from this particular instance, it seems that the sacrificing-knife was not always employed,) and becomes the expiatory victim of those sins." Mr Halhed observes,* that this ceremony reminds us of the scape-goat of

* See the Preface to the Code of Gentoo Laws, p. 9.

the

the children of Israel, and, indeed, it is not the only one in which a particular co-incidence between the Hindoo and Mosaic systems of theology may be traced.

The Ayeen Akbery informs us, that the Aswamedha Jug is performed only by great monarchs previous to their entering upon a war, that he then carries victory wherever he goes, and that whosoever has performed this ceremony a hundred times will become a monarch in the upper regions. Mr Wilkins,* commentating upon a passage, allusive to this sacrifice, in the HEETOPADES, differs from Abul Fazil; for, he says, that the sacrifice of the horse was, in antient times, performed by a king at the conclusion of a great war in which he had been victorious.

The GOMEDHA JUG, or sacrifice of the bull, they might probably derive from the same quarter; since we are told by Xenophon, that the bull in Persia was likewise sacred to the sun. This species of sacrifice, however, cannot be easily reconciled with their present enthusiastic and general attachment to that class of animals; so general and so enthusiastic, that, throughout India, to kill one of these sacred

* Advert to notes on the HEETOPADES, p. 331.

animals,

animals is a crime that can only be expiated by the instant death of the offender. There is a beautiful engraving taken from an antient sculpture in marble, and inserted in the curious and valuable collection of Montfaucon,* which is so highly illustrative of the Gomedha sacrifice, that I cannot refrain from presenting the reader with a short description of a part of it, as well as of another or two, in Dr Hyde's very learned work on the Religion of the Antient Persians, which will still more immediately elucidate the present obscure subject. The reader, who may not have read Dr Hyde's book, nor be acquainted with the profound and stupendous mysteries of the antient worship of MITHRA, concerning which I shall have occasion to treat so largely hereafter, will, perhaps, be astonished to hear that the Persians, who were of all nations the most addicted to this species of superstition, chose to perform their adorations to that deity in deep caverns and gloomy recesses. The deeper those caverns, the more gloomy those recesses, to a sublimer point of elevation mounted the zeal

* See Montfaucon, l'Antiquité expliquée, tome i. p. 373, edit. Paris, 1719. See also a similar sculpture, engraved in Dr Hyde's first plate, with other curious astronomical appendages, which will be noticed hereafter.

of

of their devotion, and more fervently glowed the never-dying flame of the sacrifice. One reason for adopting a conduct, so apparently incongruous, seems to be, that all the mysteries of religion, celebrated in the antient world, were performed, as I have expressed myself in another part of this Dissertation, *εν σκοτω και νυκτι*, in the bosom of darkness and in the dead silence of the night. Another reason for performing this worship in caves is given by Lactantius, who, after affirming that the Persians were the first people who worshipped the sun in dens and caves, adds, that they did so *to denote the eclipses of that luminary*. Around these caverns, as will be more extensively explained hereafter, when I come to describe the mysterious rites, probably celebrated in Salsette and Elephanta, were arranged various symbols of the SUN and planetary train, with sculptures of the animals that composed the signs of the zodiac, engraved on the lofty walls, and decorating the embossed roof. In this artificial planisphere conspicuously was portrayed the constellation of TAURUS, or the bull, and the bas-relief, of which the above-mentioned antiquary has given an engraving, represents a person in the full vigour of youth, adorned with a kind of tiara, such as were worn by the

the Mithratic priests in the sacrifices, and with a loose tunic floating in the air, pressing to the ground with his knee a struggling BULL, extended beneath him, and, while he holds him muzzled with the left hand, with his right he is in the act of plunging a dagger into his throat. "But why," exclaims the Abbé Banier,* whom Warburton (for once just to merit) calls the best interpreter of the mythology of the antients, "why is MITHRA, under the figure of an active robust young man, represented in the attitude of slaying a BULL, as he appears on all the monuments of the antients?" In the Abbé's opinion, it is a forcible figurative emblem of the renovated warmth and vigour of the SUN, who, having passed without heat and strength the cold wintry signs, when the spring approaches, and he enters into TAURUS, one of the vernal signs, shines forth in a highly-increased degree of strength and splendour, shadowed out under the emblem of cutting the throat of the BULL, one of the strongest and fiercest of animals. The Abbé contends,† that this symbolical sculpture is not a representation of a sacrifice to the SUN, but

* See Banier's Mythology, vol. ii. p. 104.

† Ibid.

only

only intended as an image of his power in that sign. As, however, in nearly all the bas-reliefs relative to this worship, a similar figure of a young man cutting the throat of a BULL invariably occurs, it most probably is allusive to that sacrifice: or, shall we say, that what the Persians beheld thus strikingly portrayed upon the most antient zodiac in hieroglyphic characters, invented probably by the fathers of mankind to represent the power and influence of the SUN in TAURUS, was, in succeeding ages, realised by servile and infatuated superstition, and the *slaughtered bull* was thenceforth esteemed a grateful sacrifice to the SUN, when they hailed his return to the vernal constellations, and invoked,

——————————— PERSEI sub rupibus ANTRI,
Indignata sequi torquentem cornua MITHRAM.*

The general meaning of Statius, with the reader's permission, I shall venture to give in the following paraphrase:

In Persia's hallow'd caves, the LORD OF DAY
Pours through the central gloom his fervid ray;
High wrought in burnish'd gold the zodiac shines,
And MITHRA toils through all the blazing signs.
See, rising pale from winter's drear domain,
The radiant youth resumes his vernal reign:
With sinewy arm reluctant TAURUS tames,
Beams with new grace, and darts severer flames.

* Statii Thebais, lib. i.

Although

Although I profess to give the description only of the principal figure in this sculpture, yet it ought by no means to be omitted, that, on the right side of this monument, stand two youths, with similar habits and tiaras, holding each a torch; the one raised aloft and blazing in full splendour; the other, with the lighted end directed downwards to the earth, and faintly glimmering. These expressive figures, as seems to be universally agreed among antiquaries, represent, the former the *rising*, the latter the *setting*, SUN; though, since it was the object of the sculptor to portray Mithra in his full splendour only, I should conceive they were rather intended for symbols of the *morning* and the *evening* star.

There is another forcible reason that inclines me to think this action of cutting the throat of the bull allusive to a real sacrifice, which is, that, in one of the other bas-reliefs, I mean that of the VILLA-BORGHESA, (and all of these antique sculptures, dug up in Italy, are, doubtless, only imitations of those found in Persia and Media by the Romans, who originally introduced into Italy the mysterious rites of Mithra,) upon the thigh of the slaughtered animal there is this inscription, SOLI DEO INVICTO MITHRÆ; which seems indisputably to

to allude to the circumstance of the oblation. As to the other inscription, NAMA SABASIO, which appears upon the neck of the animal, just above the part into which the dagger is plunged, and which, the Abbé says, has perplexed all the antiquaries; the meaning will appear very evident, when we consider that NAMA may possibly be an appellative, and that SABA means *the host of heaven.*

In the celebrated work of Hyde there are two other plates, peculiarly illustrative of the rites and symbols of the Mithratic religion. The former, facing page 111, exhibits, in as many different compartments, no less than four striking emblematical portraits of Mithra, and the bull sacred to him; but the one, which I wish particularly to point out to the reader's notice, is that in which an elevated figure, decorated with a high tiara, stands erect upon the same animal, with one foot placed upon his head and the other centred upon his back: his right hand grasps a *dagger,* his left supports a *globe.** These symbols display, at once, the power of the God and the extent of that power. The position of his feet on the head

* Vide Hyde, de Religione veterum Persarum, p. 111 and 113, edit. Oxon, 1760, ubi etiam supra.

and

and back of the bull, and the perpetual recurrence of that animal itself in the attitude of prostration upon all these bas-reliefs, plainly manifest, that the bull was not less than the horse sacred to the sun in Persia, and from what source the GOMEDHA JUG of India, in all probability, originated. On either side of this figure, likewise, are seen the youths with their torches, who represent the *morning* and the *evening* star, but with this difference, that, whereas, both are in the former table standing; in the latter table, the figure with the uplifted flaming torch is alone in a standing posture, while the figure, with the torch just ready to be extinguished, is beautifully represented sitting in a melancholy attitude, as if overwhelmed with anguish for the loss of his expiring light, and that the world was going to be wrapped in nocturnal clouds and incumbent darkness. In the second plate of the same book, there is an engraving of *Taurus gestans Solem*, that is, of the SUN rising on the back of the BULL, which, Hyde informs us, is a device very common on the coins of the MOGUL EMPERORS OF INDIA. The reader will perhaps be pleased to see his words at length: *Sic nempe pinguntur signa: adeo ut in dicto iconismo exhibeatur* SOL *in signo* TAURI, *Persarum more*

 designatus.

designatus. Sic etiam in nummis MAGNI MOGUL IMPERATORIS INDIÆ, *exhibitur corpus solare super dorso tauri, aut leonis, qui illud eodum modo gestat. Nam sol videtur portari et circumduci super* 12 *zodiacalia symbola, dum singula dodecatemoria percurrit.*

But, to return to the subject of the antient sanguinary sacrifices in India, of which, however unaccountable, this of the bull was one, though in the present age forbidden. They constitute a feature of national character so directly opposite to that of the modern Indians, who, according to Mr Orme, the truest delineator of that character, *shudder at the very sight of blood*, who are totally ignorant of one great branch of medical science, because *anatomical dissections* are repugnant to their religion, and who, in the opinion of the same writer, are at this day the most pusillanimous and enervated inhabitants of the globe;* that on this review it is impossible to refrain from a high degree of astonishment; and, since the subject is equally curious and profound, it is my intention not to pass it slightly over, but to give it a discussion in some degree proportionate to its

* See Orme's Hist. of Hindost. vol. i. p. 5, first edition.

importance.

importance. The object then of our inquiry is, of what nature and origin were the vindictive deities, whose implacable fury exacted, from the benignant Hindoo, rites from which his nature seems to have been so abhorrent? Let us explore the latent sources of this wonderful and complicated superstition.

From the earliest periods of time, among all idolatrous nations of antiquity, a constant and uniform belief prevailed of the agency of intellectual beings in the government of the world. They supposed the whole compass of creation to be animated with those imaginary beings, assigning to some an elevated station in the celestial orbs, to others a residence in the elements of nature, while others again had more particularly in charge the management of this terrestrial globe and superintended the concerns of mortals. But, as they imagined there were good spirits, or *αγαθοδαιμονες*, whose office was of this protecting and benevolent kind, so they also believed in the existence of beings of a very contrary nature and disposition, or *κακοδαιμονες*, whose constant employment and whose infernal delight it was to derange the beautiful order and harmony of nature, and to spread desolation through the works of God. I say

the works of God; because, there hardly ever existed a nation, notwithstanding the representation of Sanchoniatho, and other writers of that class, who did not believe in one grand original presiding Deity, but whom they suppose to be infinitely removed from the material universe which he had formed, and to govern that universe by celestial agents. The Indians, in particular, are to this day of opinion that the supreme felicity of the Deity consists in a state of divine absorption in the contemplation of his own wonderful perfections; but, still they imagine that his spirit intimately pervades every part of the creation. These good and evil genii, or, as they are called in the language of Hindostan, these DEVATAS, are represented as eternally contending together; and the incessant conflicts, that existed between them, filled creation with uproar and all its subordinate classes with dismay. The antient Persians, according to Dr Hyde,* affirmed, that there were two mighty predominant principles in nature; the first they denominated ORMUZD, or OROMASDES, the superior and benevolent being; the second they styled

* Hist. Relig. vet. Pers. c. ix. p. 160, edit. Oxon. 1760.

AHRIMAN,

AHRIMAN, or the inferior and malignant being. MITHRA seems to have been the middle and mediatorial character, the ostensible agent of the eternal beneficence, and, in the ORACLES OF ZOROASTER, is called the SECOND MIND. Oromasdes is represented as reigning from all eternity; Mithra is described as a being formed of a nature and with powers, only not INFINITE; Ahriman existed by sufferance only from the SUPREME, during that period, and for those purposes which his mind had resolved on. While the good spirits, appointed by Oromasdes, under the direction of MITHRA, to superintend the affairs of the universe, were employed in acts of perpetual kindness and guardian love to mankind, the agents of Ahriman endeavoured, by every possible means, to thwart their benign intentions, and plotted the most baneful schemes for their molestation and ruin. Correspondent to the vast powers which they possessed were the tremendous conflicts in which they engaged. All nature was convulsed by the violence and continuance of those conflicts, and the terrified human race resigned themselves to the impulses of that superstitious dread and horror with which they were overwhelmed.

If the Persian and the Hindoo legislator were not in reality the same person, which I strongly suspect they were, under two distinct appellations, it must be owned that the principles of their theology are wonderfully similar. BRAHME, THE GREAT ONE, is the supreme eternal uncreated God of the Hindoos, BRAHMA, the first created being, by whom he made and governs the world, is the prince of the beneficent spirits. He is assisted by VEESHNU, the great PRESERVER of men, who has nine several times appeared upon earth, and under a human form, for the most amiable and beneficent porposes. Veeshnu is often called CREESHNA, the Indian Apollo, and in character greatly resembles the MITHRA of Persia; the prince of the benevolent Dewtah has a second coadjutor in MAHADEO, or the DESROYING POWER OF GOD; and these three celestial beings, or, to speak more correctly, this three-fold divinity, armed with the terrors of Almighty power, pursue, throughout the extent of creation, the rebellious Dewtahs, headed by MAHASOOR,* the GREAT MALIGNANT

SPIRIT

* Mr Holwell, whom I, in part, follow here, writes this word MOISASOR; but I have taken the liberty to alter it, according to

Mr

SPIRIT who seduced them, and dart upon their flying bands the AGNYASTRA,* or fiery shafts, of divine vengeance.

The policy of legislators and the despotism of princes have never obtained a surer hold of the mind of man, or secured his obedience more firmly, than when they have employed for that purpose the fetters of superstition. To minds so deeply impressed with an idea of the agency of invisible beings as were those of the Persians and the Indians, few legal terrors were wanted to enforce the most abject submission to the mandates of their governors. Hence the rigid adherence of the PERSEES, that exiled and persecuted sect, to their antient rites, and hence that inviolable fidelity to their tenets which distinguishes the undeviating INDIANS. On this account it was, that Darius Hystaspes so ardently espoused the cause and principles of Zoroaster, that at his death he ordered himself to be enrolled the Archimagus, or chief of the magi; and from this cause, probably, it has arisen that the rajahs of India

Mr Wilkins's orthography in the Geeta, to MAHASOOR, that is, the great Asoor, or evil spirit.

* Asiatic Researches, vol. i. p. 264.

 have

have ever submitted, without a murmur, to the assumed consequence and arrogated superiority of the priests of BRAHMA.

The more timid Indian multiplied, without number, the gods of his disturbed imagination. The lightening that blasted the grove or shivered the cavern in which he performed his devotion, the furious tempest that battered to pieces his cany habitation, and, at the period of the MONSOONS, ravaged the shores of the Peninsula, appeared to him as if directed by the invisible hand of some enraged dæmon. If the fields, scorched by the beam of a direct sun, and sterile from a defect in the annual inundations, denied their accustomed produce of rice, his innocent and only food; if the TANK, that abundant source of health and felicity, which rolled through his garden a thousand fertilising streams, and which was so necessary to himself in the performance of a thousand pious ablutions, denied the necessary tribute of its water: FAMINE was, by his fears, magnified into a dæmon of haggard look and gigantic form, and the affrighted bigot resorted to what he supposed to be the surest means of propitiation. On these emergencies, whether of national distress or of domestic calamity, he hastened, like

like the Persian, to that SACRED FIRE, which he, with equal zeal, preserved from extinction; he performed, with trembling, the various prescribed ceremonies of the POOJA;* and, while his heart glowed with gratitude for favours received from the protecing Dewtah, he neglected not to deprecate the vengeance of the malignant dæmon by oblations suited to the ferocity of his character. Agonizing under the torments of superstitious terror, his blood stagnant with holy horror at the recollection of the past or the dread of the future, he thought no offering too costly, no victim too precious. As the stern injunction of the deity was explained by the barbarous priest, the child of his affection or the wife of his bosom alternately expired on altars reeking with human sacrifice. Hence, in the SACONTALA,† the epithet of *blood-thirsty* is frequently applied to the evil dæmon. If the offender happened to be of elevated rank or of distinguished fortune, the penalty of life was sometimes remitted, and the Brahmin pronounced that the divinity might be

* POOJA signifies *worship*: see the various kinds of POOJA described in the Ayeen Akbery, vol. iii. p. 226.

† Sacontala, pages 82 and 83.

appeased

appeased by a less barbarous oblation. In that case, the half of his possessions was brought to the foot of the altar, and the treasures, thus extorted, were devoted to swell the immense revenues of the temple and to gratify the insatiable avarice of the priest. It is affirmed, in the HEETOPADES,* that, "without the Brahmins rites, a sacrifice is smitten;" that is, with a curse.

Proportionate to the boon which he wished to obtain, or to the evil which he laboured to avert, was the largess the sacrificer bestowed. No less than sixteen various kinds of sacrifice, all of gold and precious stones, each rising above the other in value, are enumerated in the Ayeen Akbery.‡ Some of the articles thus enumerated are exceedingly curious, and among them are, "the amount of the sacrificer's own weight, against gold, silver, &c. golden horses, golden cows, trees, and vines of gold, ploughs of gold, chariots drawn by horses and elephants, all of gold." The value of these offerings varies from 10 to 6660 tolahs. The tolah, we are informed by Tavernier,† a merchant in gold and jewels,

* Heetopodes, p. 11. † Ayeen Akbery, vol. iii. p. 229.

‡ Indian Travels, lib. i. c. 2.

jewels, is a weight peculiarly appropriated, throughout the Mogul empire, to those precious commodities; and, according to that author, a hundred tolahs amount to thirty-eight ounces. These were probably, in time, substituted in the place of sanguinary oblations, and, from their vast amount, seem to carry evident proof that India was formerly much more abundant in wealth than in periods less recent. Indeed, the historians of Mahmud Gaznavi strongly countenance this idea, since they are quite extravagant in their account of the wealth found by him in that country. One of them, quoted by Mr Orme,* asserts that he found a tree growing out of the earth to an enormous size, of which the substance was pure gold, and this the effect of nature: thus realising Milton's Fable† of "ambrosial fruits and vegetable gold." Their offerings of a less splendid and ostentatious kind are innumerable; consisting, for the most part, of rice, flowers, fruits, sweet-meats, cusa-grass, cow's milk, and clarified butter. In the Sacontala ‡ Eendra is more than once denominated "the god with a hundred sacrifices."

* Orme's Indostan, vol. i. p. 9, first edition.

† Paradise Lost. ‡ Sacontala, p. 83.

I have both heard and read so many attempts to *confute* and even to *ridicule* the assertion here made, that the altars of India were once STAINED WITH HUMAN BLOOD, that I could wish to place the disputed subject beyond the possibility of future controversy. No fact can be more certainly demonstrated, if we allow the two best Sanscreet scholars of Europe, Sir W. Jones and Mr Wilkins, to be adequate authorities for determining the question. The name of the black goddess, to whom these human sacrifices were offered, was NAREDA or CALLEE, who is exhibited, in the Indian temples sacred to her worship, with a collar, not composed, like that of the benign deities, of a splendid assemblage of the richest gems, but of GOLDEN SKULLS, descriptive of the dreadful rites in which she took so gloomy a delight. "To her," says Sir W. Jones, "human sacrifices were antiently offered as the VEDAS enjoined, but, in the present age, they are absolutely prohibited, as are also the sacrifices of bulls and horses." This observation is accompanied with an engraving of Nareda, in the Asiatic Researches,* sufficiently savage and picturesque. Both the text of the Heetopades,† and Mr Wilkins's

* Asiatic Research. vol. i. p. 265.

† Heetopades, p. 212, and note 292.

Wilkins's explanatory notes, decidedly corroborate this assertion. "That most beautiful if not most antient collection of apologues in the world" records, under the veil of a fable, an instance of a father's sacrificing his son, to avert a dreadful calamity with which the kingdom of India was threatened by the intended flight of its guardian genius. The cruel goddess had informed him, that the offering up of that son, to the Power who presides over nature, should secure the prosperity of the reigning king and the salvation of the empire. The father relates to his son the dreadful tidings, who cheerfully consents to be sacrificed for the preservation of a great kingdom and its monarch. They approach the altar, and, when they have worshipped the image, "O goddess!" exclaims the sacrificer, "let SOOBHRAKA, our sovereign, be prosperous! and let this victim be accepted!" saying this, he cut off his son's head. The goddess, to whom this offering was made, we are informed by Mr Wilkins,* "was Callee, (a name derived from Cala, Time,) and it was to her that human sacrifices were wont to be offered, to avert any threatened evil." In another fable,† a female observes: "My husband,

* Heetopades, p. 212, and note 292. † Ibid. p. 185, note 249.

if

if he chooses, *can sell me to the gods* or give me to the Brahmins," which the translator interprets, as referring to the "Naramedha, or human sacrifice, not uncommon in the earlier ages." This angry deity is now propitiated by a sacrifice of kids and young buffaloes; so that at this day the vestige of blood remains.

It has been before remarked, that Mr Holwell strenuously denies the existence of these bloody rites in India: whereas, in fact, his whole relation, in regard to this sable personage, tends in the strongest manner to establish our belief of the general prevalence of this dreadful superstition throughout that country in very remote æras. He tells us, that an antient pagoda, dedicated to this terrible divinity, stands about three miles south of Calcutta, close to a small brook, which the Brahmins believe to have been the original course of the Ganges; that, from her name of Callee, the place itself is called Callee Ghat; that her fast falls on the last day of the moon in September, and that she is worshipped *all the night of that day universally,* but more particularly at Callee Ghat above-mentioned; that different parts of this Gentoo goddess are adored in different places of Hindostan; her eyes at Callee Ghat, her head at Benares, her hand at Bindoobund, &c. that she

she takes her name from her usual habiliment, which is *black*, and is frequently called the BLACK GODDESS, Callee being the common name for *ink*.* On this *fast* also, he observes, worship and offerings are paid to the *manes* of *deceased ancestors*. The origin of this singular deity is perfectly in unison with her life and history. Arrayed in complete armour, she sprang from the eye of the dreadful war-bred goddess Durga, the vanquisher of dæmons and giants, at the very instant that she was sinking under their united assault; when Callee, joining her extraordinary powers to those of her parent, they renew the combat, and rout their foes with great and undistinguished slaughter. I cannot refrain from adding in this place, in corroboration of a former remark, that, according to Herodotus, the principal and favourite deity of the Scythians was a war-divinity, to whom that historian gives the appellation of Mars. To this deity they erected, in every precinct, a vast quadrangular altar, so vast as to cover three stades of land, consisting of an immense pile of wood collected into bundles; and, upon the top of the altar, they

* See Holwell, part ii. p. 131, and the engraving of Callee, which cannot fail of exciting disgust and horror in the reader.

placed

placed a rusty scimitar of iron, deeply crimsoned with the blood of the victims, as an emblem of their savage divinity and of their no less savage rites.* Callee, we see, was born in *battle*, and from her birth inured to scenes of *carnage* and *death*; and it is deserving of notice that the youth, said to have been sacrificed by his father in the fable of the Heetopades just cited, was of the Katteri, or war-tribe, and makes use of this remarkable expression, "that it was a saying which particularly belonged to that tribe, that, on some distinguished occasions, human sacrifices were proper."

The antients, indeed, seldom sacrificed men, except at some grand and awful crisis, when a nation was convulsed by the violence of earthquakes or desolated by the rage of pestilence, in seasons of gloomy despondency or in the exulting moment of success and triumph. The deeper the distress, or the brighter the triumph, the more distinguished, by birth and accomplishments, were obliged to be the objects selected for sacrifice. Neither the tenderest youth nor the loveliest beauty was spared; the priest sometimes expired by the wound of the immolating knife, and kings themselves were sa-

* Herodoti, lib. iv. p. 276.

crificed

crificed for the welfare of their subjects. It must still, however, be owned that the altars of Diana in the Tauric Scythia, and in Egypt, the more gloomy altars of Busiris, *(tristes Busiridis aræ,)* and some others in the antient world, were proverbially infamous for the profusion of human blood by which they were contaminated. The mode of devoting to death the miserable victims was various. Some of them were strangled, and so immediately put out of their torture: others had the skull shattered by the violent blow of a mallet from the muscular arm of the priest: others were stretched on the back, and had the breast laid bare by the stroke of a sabre, while the unfeeling VATES stood round, watching the tremulous motion of the convulsed limbs, and drawing cruel presages from the streaming of the vital fluid. The most dreadful and disgusting of all was that adopted by the Scythians, and described perhaps with aggravation by Herodotus.* "They sacrifice," says that historian, "every hundredth man of their prisoners to the deity. They first pour libations of wine upon the head of the victim; they then cut his throat, extended over a chalice to receive the blood: they after-

* Herodoti, lib. iv. p. 277.

wards ascend the pile of faggots, and wash with the blood the erected scimitar, the emblem of the god. While this is performing by the priests above, those below, after having deprived the wretched sufferer of life, with the sacrificial knife separate the right arm from the shoulder, which they hurl into the air, and leave the body to putrify upon the ground." It appears, however, as if the victim in India generally perished by fire or decapitation, or perhaps, I may add, *inhumation*; for, that they were no strangers to that practice, is evident from two figures exhibited in Mr Niebuhr's seventh plate, the heads of which alone are apparent, the bodies being *interred* quite up to the throat, and a rajah appearing in the sculptures above, as if sitting in judgement upon the criminals.

The doctrine of the Metempsychosis, originally intended to act as a check upon this barbarous propensity, in time became basely perverted, and operated as a powerful incentive towards the continuance of these rites of human sacrifice, disarming anguish of its sting and the grave of its horrors. The Indians seem, like the Scythians, to have thought, that, in the future state, the splendour of retinue and the tender offices of domestic affection were absolutely necessary to the happiness of the deceased,

ceased. The account which Texeira gives of so many women and slaves burning themselves with their lord, the Naique or Viceroy of Madura, is confirmed in a great degree by what Mr Orme,* in his Historical Fragments, reports, that with Seevajee's corpse were burnt attendants, animals, and wives. Marco Polo informs us, that, in the island of Ceylon, a number of persons of quality, styling themselves "faithful to the king in this world and in the next," were accustomed to destroy themselves when he died. In Tonquin, according to Tavernier, "many lords of the court are buried alive with their sovereign;" and Barbosa, who, with the two preceding authors is quoted by M. Renaudot in the Anciennes Rélations† in proof of the fact which I am labouring to establish beyond dispute, asserts, that, in the Indies, particularly among the Naires, it was a custom for the great men in the pay of the king, when he died or fell in battle, to seek death by revenging his fall, or to lay violent hands upon themselves in order *to bear him company*. At the death of the Scythian monarch,

* See Orme's Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire, p. 126.

† See Anciennes Rélations, first part, in note z, p. 33, of the English edition.

 we

we read in Herodotus,* that the principal officers of his household were strangled, together with many fine horses, and in his tomb were deposited golden goblets, and other necessary domestic utensils, for his use in the other world.

The last resembling custom which I shall notice between the Scythian and Indian nations, was their great veneration for the memory of their ancestors. When upbraided by Darius for flying before his army, the former exclaim, "Pursue us to the sepulchres of our ancestors, and attempt to violate their hallowed remains, and you shall soon find with what desperate valour the Scythians can fight." The Indians, we learn from Mr Holwell, have so profound a veneration for the ashes of their progenitors, that, on the fast of Callee, worship and offerings are paid to their *manes*, and Mr Wilkins, in a note upon the Heetopades, favours us with additional information,† that the offerings consisted of consecrated cakes, that the ceremony itself is denominated STRADHA, and that a Hindoo's hopes of happiness after death greatly depend upon his having children to perform this cere-

* Herodoti, lib. iv. p. 70.

† Heetopades, p. 271, and note 372.

mony,

mony, by which he expects that his soul will be released from the torments of NARAKA, or hell. In his sixth note upon the text of the GEETA, his account of this ceremony is still more ample; for, in that note, he acquaints us that the Hindoos are enjoined, by the Vedas, to offer these cakes to the ghosts of their ancestors as far back as the third generation; that this greater ceremony of the Stradha is performed on the day of the new moon in every month, but that they are commanded by those books daily to propitiate them, by an offering of water, which is called Tarpan, a word signifying *to satisfy, to appease*. A speech of the Indian emperor Dushmanta, in the Sacontala, remarkably exemplifies this observation of Mr Wilkins. That emperor, struck with horror at the idea of dying childless, exclaims, "Ah me! the departed souls of my ancestors, who claim a share in the funeral cake, which I have no son to offer, are apprehensive of losing their due honour, when Dushmanta shall be no more on earth:—who, then, alas! will perform in our family those obsequies which the Vedas prescribe?—My forefathers must drink, instead of a pure libation, this flood of tears, the only offering which a man who dies childless can make them." Mr Wilkins judiciously remarks

 that

that these ceremonies were not unknown to the Greeks and Romans, in proof of which, if necessary, many instances might be brought from classical writers.

SECTION

SECTION II.

Commences with a general View of the Indian Mythology, and displays the Analogy subsisting between the antient Religion of INDIA *and* PERSIA, *particularly in their universal aud enthusiastic Veneration of the Solar Orb and Elementary Fire.—The Indians sacrifice to the* MOON *under the Character of a Male Divinity.—An extensive Review taken of the* SABIAN SUPERSTITION, *or Worship of the Host of Heaven, in the earliest Ages of the World.—The Souls of deceased Heroes elevated to the Stars, and adored as the Genii of the revolving Orbs.—The Persian Theology resumed.—The Laws of the Persian Zoroaster and Brahma have a wonderful Feature of Resemblance.—The Race originally the same, and probably the Legislators not different.—The Antiquity of the Four* VEDAS, *or Sacred Books of India, examined.—Historical Observation relative to Zoroaster, and introductory to the Investigation of the stupendous Antiquities remaining to this Day in the Caverns of Elephanta and Salsette.*

THE investigation of that unpleasing but curious subject, the human sacrifices of the antients, which engaged so large a portion of the former chapter, has too long detained us from the consideration of the other parts of the extensive system of the Hindoo Mythology; without a comprehensive insight into which it is impossible to understand the pages of their early history, or to arrive at any satisfactory knowledge of the hieroglyphics under which that history is veiled. Never did a belief in aërial beings, in the phantoms engendered by the warmth of a glowing and enthusiastic imagination, so universally infect a people as that belief did in antient times, and does, at this day, infect the people of Hindostan. In the Ayeen Akbery, the world is said to be divided into ten quarters; over each of which presides a guardian spirit. Their names, and those of the quarters over which they rule, as stated in that authentic book, are thus arranged: "Indree, Aujin, Jum, Benyroot, Wurrun, Bayoo, Kobeir, Jysan, Birmha, Naga; East, South-east, South, South-west, West, North-west, North, North-east, Above, Below." Of these Dewtah, only two are deserving particular

lar notice: Birmha, or Brahma, the prince of the Dewtahs, who presides over all *above*, and Naga, or, as Sir W. Jones* denominates him, SESHANAGA, who presides over all *below*. Of Brahma we have spoken above, and shall have occasion to speak much more hereafter. But of this sovereign of Patala, or the infernal regions, who also is the king of serpents, for the Hindoo Hell is composed of serpents, I am convinced my readers will think themselves obliged to me for the following account taken from the Bhagavat and inserted from the author last quoted. Creeshna is represented in that poem as descending with his favourite Arjun to the palace of this formidable divinity. and he is thus described: "He had a gorgeous appearance, with a thousand heads, and on each of them a crown set with resplendent jewels, one of which was larger and brighter than the rest; his eyes gleamed like flaming torches, but his neck, his tongues, and his body, were black; the skirts of his habiliments were yellow, and a sparkling jewel hung in every one of his ears: his arms were extended and adorned with rich bracelets; and his hands bore the

* I am aware that Indree, the god of the firmament, is also frequently called the prince of the Dewtahs. But Brahma is the supreme first-born Dewtah. Consult the Gentoo Code, p. 39.

holy

holy shell, the radiated weapon, the mace for war, and the lotos."

The writers, who flourished in Greece and Rome had, as I before remarked, but a very imperfect idea of the true principles of the religion of the Indians. Jupiter Ammon, Bacchus, Pan, and Pluto, are said, by those writers, to have been the principal divinities worshipped in India. Strabo* expressly says, that they worshipped Jupiter Pluvialis, the river Ganges, and Εγκωϱίους Δαίμονες *Indigetes Genios*. Such were the Grecian appellations for the several deities, or rather attributes of deity, adored throughout Hindostan. With far more truth was the celebrated GANGES affirmed, by the same writer, to be an object of superstitious veneration, when, charged with the blessings of Providence, he descended in majesty from the mountains, and, with his overflowings, fertilized the thirsty soil. In fact, the legislator whose sublime precepts improved, the hero whose resistless sword defended, the patriot whose inventive fancy adorned with useful arts, the country that gave them birth, received the fervent prayers of the grateful Hindoo, were first remembered with admira-

* Strabonis Geograph. lib. xv. p. 682.

tion

tion and then idolized. Without referring to the Egyptian Apis, we may assert, that the very animal, whose milk nourished him and whose labours turned the fruitful sod, received his tributary homage and was ranked in order next to a divinity. This is the general key that unlocks the portals of the grand temple of Indian superstition, and, perhaps, taken in a more general point of view, of all the superstitions of every region and of every denomination upon earth. To the philosophic eye, that contemplates without prejudice their endless variety, this is the universal clue to their full developement, and thus only can the mighty maze be intimately and successfully explored.

Besides the deities above enumerated, the Indians have a guardian genius, presiding over water, named VARUNA;* over fire, named AGNI, the forger of the fiery shafts, called from him Agnyastra; † and over the winds,‡ named PAVAN. All the fanciful characters of a mythology, not greatly dissimilar from that of

* See an engraving of Varuna, with her insignia, opposite p. 215, of the first volume of the Asiatic Researches.

† Asiat. Research. vol. i. p. 248. ‡ Ibid. 258.

Greece

Greece and Rome, seem to have prevailed among the Hindoos from the earliest periods. They have CARTICEYA,* the god of war, formidable with six heads, and bearing, in his numerous hands, spears, sabres, and other hostile weapons; whose prowess is not inferior to the Mars of Rome. They have LACSHMI, the goddess of plenty, and the wife of Veeshnu the preserver; who, in Mr Holwell's descriptive print, is represented crowned with ears of grain, and encircled by a plant, *bearing fruit*, forcibly reminding us of the Ceres of the antients. They have SERASWATTI, the protectress of arts and sciences, with her palmira-leaf, and her reed or pen for writing; ornaments more peculiarly characteristic of her high station than those which graced the armed Minerva of the Greeks. They have a more beautiful Cupid in CAMA, the god of love with his flowery shafts and cany bow: although a regard to truth forbids me to add, that they have a more decent Venus in BHAVANI, the consort of Seeva, and goddess of generation; in honour of whom, on all the walls of the

* Asiat. Research. 252, with an engraving. Carticeya is generally written Karteek. The former is the Sanscreet word unabridged.

pagodas

pagodas of Hindostan, sacred to that deity, such pictures are delineated and such images are engraven, as though by no means inconsistent with *their*, are not at all compatible with *our*, notions of delicacy and decorum. These are, indeed, the fanciful creation of poets and painters; but the characters of a mythology far less pleasing were, before their exhibition, deeply imprinted on the minds of the Hindoos. They were prepared for the reception of whatever partook of the nature of fable and mystery; and, if the sportive imagination wandered occasionally in the regions of mirth and festivity, they were soon recalled, by impressions at once awful and durable, in the contemplation of more gloomy objects. They found matter of alarm and dread even in the attributes of the sacred triple deity, who was appointed to be their defender against the malevolent Dewtah; and if, at one time, the amiable character and office of the preserver Veeshnu inspired them with grateful affection and veneration, they were, at other times, filled with the utmost horror in contemplating the dreadful insignia and the desolating fury of the destroyer Rudra, or Mahadeo.

Although I am apprehensive of incurring the censure of my readers for extending to too great

great a length these reflections upon what is called, in India, the worship of Dewtahs, and, in other countries, that of Dæmons, yet, before I shall be able to give any clear or satisfactory idea of the probable devotion antiently practised in the caverns of Salsette and in the magnificent pagoda of Elephanta, it is necessary that we should still wider extend our survey of this stupendous subject. What has already engaged our attention is but a portion of that gigantic fabric of superstition which cast its mighty shadow over all the antient world. The more splendid part of that devotion remains still to be noticed. The former were earth-born deities, and we have loitered too long with the untutored Indian who only sees "God in clouds and hears him in the wind." As there were deities who were permitted to range the earth, so there were deities of a more exalted nature, who, as we before observed, had their station in the celestial orbs. Those glittering orbs now demand our attention. Let us ascend the empyreum with some portion of the zeal and fervour of the adorers of those shining, but senseless, deities.

Two of the principal sources of all mythology, particularised by Sir W. Jones, are, a wild admiration of the heavenly bodies, particularly

of

of the SUN, and an immoderate respect paid to the memory of powerful, wise, and virtuous, ancestors, especially the founders of kingdoms, legislators, and warriors. If this remark on the origin of mythology be generally applicable to most nations, so it is in a peculiar manner forcible in the survey which we are now taking of that of the Hindoos. It is the SUN, that vast body of fire, which, Milton says, "Looks from his sole dominion like the god of this new world," it is that glorious planet, which beams with such transcendent and unceasing splendor in Eastern countries, whose ray hath kindled the devotions of mankind from age to age, and hath been the great fountain of idolatry in India. Indeed, the most antient superstition of all nations has been the worship of the SUN, as the lord of heaven and governor of the world, and in particular it prevailed in Phœnicia, Chaldæa, Egypt, and, from later information, we may add Peru and Mexico. Represented in a variety of ways, and concealed under a multitude of fanciful names, through all the revolutions of time the great luminary of heaven hath exacted from the generations of men the tribute of devotion.

How particularly the antient Persians were addicted to this mode of worship, how pro-

found

found and universal was their veneration of FIRE, and particularly of the SOLAR FIRE, is evident in every page of Dr Hyde; who has made that religion the subject of his accurate investigation. The infatuated votaries of this religion were forbidden to spit into the fire, or to throw water upon it, even if the metropolis were in flames. The Magi, however, as has been before remarked, did not deny a SUPREME PRESIDING PRINCIPLE, the Creator and Governor of the universe, who was the proper object of man's adoration, but they considered the SUN as his image in the visible universe, as a faint copy of the bright original, worthy to be honoured with external worship and devout prostration. They imagined his throne to be seated in the SUN, and that it was the paradise of the blessed. From the Magi of Persia the idolatrous infection might easily spread to the Brachmanes of India, between whom an occasional intercourse, from the earliest ages, may, without violating probability, be supposed to have existed. Under the character of the god SURYA, of whom, and his car, drawn by seven green* horses, and guided by his charioteer ARUN, or the Dawn, an engraving

* Green, as the emblem, I presume, of eternal youth.

is

SCULPTURE *on an Ancient Mausoleum, at Persepolis.*



Soul, ascending upon a Cloud to Heaven.

from D. Hyde.

is given in the Asiatic Researches, the SOLAR ORB is regarded with adoration by the Hindoos, and the sect more particularly devoted to the worship of that deity are called SAURA. Indeed, it is not improbable that, in very remote æras, the Indians held the Sun in almost as general veneration as their Persian neighbours. We are informed by a writer,* who visited India seventeen hundred years ago, that he there beheld a most superb temple erected in honour of that planet, the walls of which were of red marble, resembling fire, and interspersed with streaks of gold. On the pavement of this temple was an image of the radiant divinity, hardly inferior in splendour to his own dazzling sphere: his rays being imitated in a boundless profusion of rubies, pearls, and diamonds, of inestimable value, arranged in a most judicious manner, and darting forth a lustre scarcely tolerable to the organs of sight. As this account of Apollonius may be considered as suspicious, I shall here insert a description of the TEMPLE of the SUN from the Ayeen Akbery, which, although Mr Gladwin conceives Abul Fazil to have been deceived in regard to its magnitude, since no traces of this vast fabric at present remain, will yet be con-

* Philostratus in Vit. Apollon. lib. ii. p. 87.

sidered as a proof that such a worship did actually flourish there at some remote period in its meridian glory.

"Near to Jagernaut is the temple of the SUN, in the erecting of which was expended the whole revenue of Orissa for twelve years. No one can behold this immense edifice without being struck with amazement. The wall, which surrounds the whole, is one hundred and fifty cubits high and nineteen cubits thick, There are three entrances to it. At the eastern gate there are two very fine figures of elephants, each with a man upon his trunk. On the west are two surprising figures of horsemen completely armed; and over the northern gates are carved two tigers, who, having killed two elephants, are sitting upon them. In the front of the gate is a pillar of black stone, of an octagonal form, fifty cubits high. There are nine flights of steps; after ascending which, you come into an extensive enclosure, where you discover a large dome, constructed of stone, upon which are carved the SUN and the STARS, and, round them, is a border, on which is represented a variety of human figures expressing the different passions; some kneeling, others prostrated with their faces upon the earth; together with minstrels, and a number of strange and wonderful animals, such as never existed

but

but in imagination."* This is said to be a work of seven hundred and thirty years antiquity: it was erected by a RAJA. The Ayeen Akbery farther informs us, that some of the Hindoo philosophers consider the fixed stars and planets as BEINGS, and as borrowing their light from the sun; others assert that they derive their light from the moon, and believe each to be under the influence of some celestial spirit; while others, again, affirm, that the stars are the souls of men departed this life, and raised to this high dignity in reward of their virtues and austerities.

At this day the Indian rajas are fond of tracing back to the solar deity their fabulous origin, and Mr Dow† acquaints us, that he himself was in possession of a long list of a dynasty of kings, who boasted the distinguished title of SURYA-bans and CHANDRA-bans, or children of the sun and moon. The Asiatic Researches confirm and explain this intelligence, by informing us, that SURYA‡ is believed to have frequently descended from his car in a human shape and to have begotten an earthly progeny, equally renowned in the Indian stories with the Heliades of Greece; and

* Ayeen Akbery, vol. iii. p. 11. † Dow, vol. i. p. 31.

‡ Asiat. Research. vol. i. p. 263.

that another great Indian family are called the children of the moon, or CHANDRA, under which form ESWARA, or the god of nature, is often worshipped. We must not be surprised, the president of the Asiatic Society observes, at finding, on a close examination, that the characters of all the pagan deities, male and female, melt into each other, and at last into one or two; for, it seems a well-founded opinion, that the whole crowd of gods and goddesses, in antient Rome and modern Varanes, means only the powers of nature, and, principally, the SUN. He owns himself inclined to believe that not only Creeshna or Veeshnu, but even Brahma and Seeva, when united and expressed by the mystical word OM, an expression that frequently occurs in Sanscreet invocations* of the deity, were designed by the first idolaters to represent the SOLAR FIRE. By the triliteral word AUM, which letters coalesce and form OM, the triple divinity, Brahma, Veeshnu, and Seeva, are meant to be expressed; or, in other words, the power of the Almighty to create, to preserve, and to destroy. It may be added, that the term OM is considered in so sacred a light, that it never escapes the lips of

* It particularly occurs in a most sublime prayer to BOODH, translated by Mr Wilkins, in Asiat. Research. vol. i. p. 285.

a

a pious Hindoo, but is the subject of his meditation in holy and profound silence. Their mode of adoring the SUN is said, by Lucian, in his treatise de Saltatione, to have consisted in a circular dance, in imitation of that orb's supposed motion round the earth, by which all nature was gladdened, and from which the various ranks of beings derived light and support. SURYA KOOND is mentioned, under the Subah of Owd, in the Ayeen Akbery, as a place of religious worship very celebrated and much frequented; and a festival called the SURYA POOJA, or the worship of the sun, Mr Holwell* acquaints us, is still observed on the seventh day of the new moon, in January, when particular offerings of flowers are made to that luminary in the Ganges. The vestiges of this superstition are, in fact, at this day, evident in all the sacred rites and multiform ceremonies of the Brahmins. At their first putting on the ZENNAR, or sacred cord of *three threads*, the mystic symbol of their faith, they learn the *gaytéree*, which are certain words in praise of the SUN. At sun-rise they turn to the east, and, filling the palms of their hands with water, and at the same time repeating a

* See Holwell on the Gentoo fasts and festivals, India Tracts, part ii. p. 134.

prayer, they throw it towards that luminary. They preserve, constantly burning, a kind of *sacred fire*, kindled by the friction of two pieces of palass-wood, with which they perform the howm, or *burnt sacrifice*. The new-born babe of a Brahmin is obliged to be exposed to the *solar beam*, and, in the words of the Ayeen Akbery,* to conclude, and in some degree to explain the mystic rite, THEY WORSHIP GOD IN THE SUN AND IN FIRE.

The following passages, in proof of what has been advanced, concerning the veneration entertained by the Indians for the sun and fire, are extracted from the three principal translations, from the Sanscreet, which have yet appeared in the English language; I mean the GEETA and the HEETOPADES, published by Mr Wilkins, and the beautiful drama of SACONTALA, or, *The fatal Ring*, by Sir William Jones. These three compositions are of the most venerable antiquity, and in them, doubtless, are displayed the manners and principles prevailing at those remote æras in which they were written.

In the GEETA, Arjun is informed by Creeshna, that "God is in the *fire* of the altar,

* Ayeen Akbery, vol. i. p. 215, 220, 227, where all these various circumstances are stated at large.

and

and that the devout, with offerings, direct their worship unto God in the *fire*." P. 54. "I am the *fire*, I am the victim." P. 80. The Divinity is frequently characterised in that book, as in other Sanscreet compositions, by the word OM, that mystic emblem of the Deity in India, bearing, probably, the same signification as the Egyptian ON, which, Sir William Jones observes,* is generally supposed to mean the SUN. Besides innumerable allusions, throughout the text, to the "ardent fire, the glorious sun, the immeasurable light," in the episode annexed, the refulgent CHAKRA, or warlike weapon of Narayan, beautiful, yet terrible, to behold, is said to have "glowed like the sacrificial flame," and to have "burnt like the oil-fed fire." Pages 150 and 151.

In the HEETOPADES it is said, that "*fire* is the superior of the Brahmins, as the Brahmin is the superior of the tribes." P. 35. In the note on this passage, Mr Wilkins remarks, that this element, in antient times, seems to have been universally *deified*; that the Hindoos are enjoined, by the Vedas, to light up a fire, produced in the manner I before stated from the Ayeen Akbery, and to cherish it as long as they live. With this fire, he adds, all their sacri-

* Asiatic Researches, vol. i. p. 242.

fices are burnt, their nuptial altar flames, and, finally, the funeral pile is kindled: "The SUN should be worshipped on the back, the GOD OF FIRE on the belly." P. 101.

In the SACONTALA, still more numerous instances occur, in which the orb of the sun and the hallowed fire are spoken of and addressed in terms of adoration: "Water was the first work of the Creator, and *fire* receives the oblations ordained by law; the sacrifice is performed with solemnity; may ISA, the God of nature," (a personification of the Sun, the ISIS of the Egyptians,) "bless and sustain you!" The following passage will prove of two-fold utility towards explaining and illustrating what has before been remarked: "O king," exclaim the pupils of the venerable Canna, amidst the central glooms of their holy grove, "while we are beginning our evening sacrifice, the figures of blood-thirsty dæmons, embrowned by clouds collected at the departure of the day, glide over the *sacred hearth* and spread consternation around." P. 38. "My sweet child, there has been a happy omen: the young Brahmin, who officiated in our morning sacrifice, though his sight was impeded by clouds of smoke, dropped the clarified butter into the very centre of the *adorable flame*:" "When he entered the place where the *holy fire* was blazing, he heard

heard a voice from heaven pronouncing divine measures." "As the wood, Sami, becomes pregnant with *mysterious fire*." P. 43. "My best-beloved, come and walk with me round the *sacrificial fire*; may *these fires* preserve thee! *fires*, which spring to their appointed stations on the holy hearth and consume the consecrated wood, while the fresh blades of mysterious cusa-grass lie scattered around them! *sacramental fires*, which destroy sin with the rising fumes of clarified butter!" P. 47. "Could Arun" (the charioteer of the Sun, that is, the dawn) "dispel the shades of night, if the DEITY WITH A THOUSAND BEAMS had not placed him before the car of day?" P. 85. In selecting these passages from the drama of Sacontala, I have reluctantly passed over pages glowing with all the splendour of Oriental imaginary, crowded with such novel and beautiful descriptions, and breathing such elevated sentiments of friendship, as well as such impassioned strains of tender affection, that I cannot too strongly recommend to the reader an attentive perusal of the whole piece, and he will not fail heartily to join with me, in hoping that the translator may recede from this declared resolution to engage no farther in tasks of a similar nature.

The

The MOON, the next conspicuous luminary of heaven, is by no means without *his* tribe of adorers in Hindostan. *His*, I say; for, contrary to all other systems of mythology, the MOON shines forth to the Hindoos a male divinity. This is surely an argument that proves how little they have condescended to borrow from other nations; for in this male deity, we are unable to trace even the Isis of Egypt, whom Herodotus* declares to have been constantly represented and worshipped, at Busiris, under the form of a woman with the horns of a cow; (as IO was in Greece;) upon which account, and because that animal was sacred to Isis, the cow was held in the highest veneration throughout Egypt. The Indian name of the MOON is CHANDRA, and Mr Wilkins, our unerring guide, informs us,† that he is drawn by the fancy of the Hindoo poets as a deity, sitting in a splendid chariot drawn by two antelopes, and holding in his right hand a rabbit. We learn, from the Heetopades, that, to him, fountains were dedicated. Of those sacred

* Heredoti, lib. ii. p. 118. Stephani edit. 1592. This whole second book of Herodotus, and part of the third, treat of the Egyptians, their history, religion, and manners, and, therefore, I have minutely attended to it.

† Heetopades, p. 177, and note 235.

fountains

fountains there are many in Hindostan: and, in particular, the Ayeen Akbery reports,* that, in the village of Kehrow, in Cashmere, there are no less than 360; a number worthy of notice, because the exact number of the days of the antient year, before it was reformed by more correct observation. To pierce the hitherto unexplored depths of the Hindoo system of astronomy, connected as that system is with their religion, is alike beyond the scope of my ability and the means of information in my possession. If encouraged by the public to proceed in these investigations into the antient history and sciences of that country, I shall, in a future portion of this infant work, attempt the arduous task of presenting my readers with the substance of what *is already known* on that head; and shall principally regulate my researches by the chapter on astronomy in the Ayeen Akbery, which is a professed extract from the famous Surya Sudhant of India, a book composed, Abul Fazil informs us, "some hundred thousand years ago;" by M. Bailly's celebrated "Traité de l'Astronomie Indienne et Orientale;" by Mr Playfair's accurate and ingenious dissertation, lately

* Ayeen Akbery, vol. ii. p. 159.

published

published in the second volume of the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh; and by the vast treasure of information to be collected from Mr Costard's profound Treatise upon the Astronomy of the Chaldæans, Arabians, and other Eastern nations. For the present, it will be sufficient for us to take a general retrospect of the gradual advances made by the human mind, from contemplating and admiring the celestial orbs, to deifying and adoring them. This will in its consequences lead us to a more particular consideration of that other principal source of all mythology mentioned before, viz. an immoderate respect paid to the memory of powerful, wise, and virtuous, ancestors, especially the founders of kingdoms, legislators, and warriors.

Devoted to pastoral life, and scattered over the extensive plains of Asia, the antient fathers of the human race could not avoid being deeply struck with the number, the beauty, and the splendour, of the heavenly bodies. Amidst the silence of surrounding night, in those delightful regions where the mildness of the climate allows the inhabitants to sleep in the open air, the wakeful eye of contemplation beheld and marked the slow progressive motion of those bodies through the clear blue sky

sky above them. They observed their various mutations, they noted their distinguishing phænomena, the rising of some and the setting of others; and, from that ascension and decline, they learned to regulate their conduct as to the times and the seasons proper for the sowing of grain and the tillage of the ground. In process of time, they formed catalogues of the stars, they arranged them under various classes, and registered them in regular series. They portioned out the visible firmament itself into forty-eight different constellations, and, in conformity to the hieroglyphic taste of the times, distinguished those constellations by the figures of various animals and other imaginary similitudes. From long and accurate observation of the consequences attending the particular situation of some of them in the heavens, they supposed these revolving orbs to have an influence upon the earth and upon the seasons; and the Greek and Roman poets, probably imitating the antient writers of Egypt and Syria, crowd their pages with allusions to those supposed influences. Non hæc Pleiades faciunt, nec *aquosus* Orion.*

* Propertius, ii. 16. 51.

Nec

Nec, sævus Arcturi *cadentis*
Impetus, aut *orientis* Hædi.*

A passage, which occurs in the antient and venerable book of Job, seems pointedly to allude to the reigning superstition of the day, *Canst thou restrain the sweet influences of Pleiades or loosen the bands of Orion?** It was natural for those, who maintained the doctrine of their influence upon the elements of nature, to extend still farther their romantic conjectures, and to assert a similar predominant influence of the celestial orbs in all terrestrial concerns, but especially in the important and interesting events which befal great nations, in the prosperity and desolation of kingdoms, in the elevation to empire of triumphant virtue, and in the downfall of defeated tyranny. The planetary train, that constitute our own system, as performing their revolutions nearer the earth, were thought to have a more particular ascendency over the fate of its inhabitants; and the period of their transit over the sun's disk, and that of their occasionally coming into conjunction with any other constellation, was regarded as a period pregnant with the most awful events and productive of the most astonishing vicissitudes.

* Hor. iii. Carm. 1, 27.

Impressed

Impressed, therefore, with alternate wonder and terror at beholding these imagined effects of their influence upon this globe, from vigilantly observing, mankind proceeded by degrees to respect and venerate them, and intense ardour of contemplation in time mounted to all the fervour of devotion. Some of the antients supposed the STARS to be inhabited by beings, who not only guided their motions, but directed their benign or pernicious influences, and, consequently, to those presiding beings they addressed their adoration. Others imagined the STARS to be themselves animated intelligences, or ZOPHESEMIN,* and paid to the *sphere* the worship due to its Maker, But, almost every nation of the antient world united in considering them as the residence of departed spirits and the glorious receptacles of beatified virtue. According to the preceding extracts from the Ayeen Akbery, the Hindoo philosophers were deeply infected with each of these errors; and the accounts given by Sir Robert Barker,† in the Philosophical Transactions, of the remains of astronomical and mathematical instruments, stupendously large, immoveable from the spot,

* See Bishop Cumberland's Sanchoniatho, p. 2.

† Phil. Transact. vol. lxvii. p. 598.

and

constructed of stone, some of them upwards of twenty feet in height," which he saw in the antient observatory of Benares, as well as the discovery which Mr Call * reports, in the same book, he himself made of the signs of the zodiac on the cielings of many of the more antient *choulteries* of the Peninsula, strongly incline us to think that the science of astronomy was, in antient India, carried to the utmost height of perfection, attainable in those periods and by those instruments; and, at the same time, it was, undoubtedly, attended with all those degrading superstitions, such as divination, incantation, and judicial astrology, which were its inseparable concomitants in that early æra. It is a most singular circumstance, that the days of the week, in India, are arranged, as in Egypt and Greece, according to the number of the planets, and are distinguished by similar appellations, and, for my own part, I have not a doubt but that the various spheres, or *boobuns*, of purification, through which the doctrine of the Metempsychosis, as explained by Mr Halhed,† has doomed the

* Phil. Transact. vol. lxii. p. 353.

† See page 46 of his Preface to the Gentoo Code, quarto edition, and page 41 of the same Preface, where the Sanscreet names

the soul to pass in its progress to consummate happiness and perfection, have a direct allusion to the *planets*. But I am launching into a vast ocean; in which it was not at present my intention to venture my small bark.

To those bright and conspicuous mansions of the sky, as I have observed, the servile adulation of the antient nations of the earth exalted the departed spirits of illustrious kings and legislators; while the partial fondness and blind zeal of individuals wafted to the same happy regions the souls of their deceased progenitors who were venerable for religion and virtue. A variety of passages in the antient poets may be adduced in proof of this assertion, but particularly one in Virgil, who, in a strain of unmanly flattery to Augustus, while yet living, asks him among which of the constellations he will choose to take up his future residence.

> Anne novum sidus tardis te mensibus addas
> Qua locus ERIGONEN inter CHELÀSQUE sequentes
> Panditur? Ipse tibi jam brachia contrahit ardens
> SCORPIUS, et cœli justa plus parte reliquit.
>
> Georg. i. 33.

These lines are also quoted by that ingenious astronomer, Mr Costard,* but for another pur-

names of the days of the week are enumerated in their proper order, as they also are in the Ayeen Akbery, p. 12.

* See Costard's Astronomy, p. 19.

pose, the elucidation of an astronomical remark; and it would appear from that remark that the accuracy of the poet's description does him greater honour than the fulsome compliment contained in them did Augustus. The contagion of *sidereal worship*, in consequence of the stars being regarded as animated intelligences, or as inhabited by divinities, spread rapidly and universally among all the nations of the Eastern world, except among that favoured people to whom the Almighty thought proper to reveal the glorious doctrines of the true religion. For, thus, in the most antient and most sublime drama which the human intellect ever produced, the devout JOB makes protestation of his innocence as to the crime of this prevailing idolatry!* *If I beheld the* SUN *when it shined or the* MOON *walking in brightness, and my heart hath been secretly enticed or my mouth hath kissed my hand, this, also, were an iniquity to be punished by the Judge; for, I should then have denied the God that is above!* The planets, in time, became distinguished by the names of the most renowned personages in fabulous antiquity, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Apollo, Mercury, Venus, and Diana: but, these orbs, from their rising and setting, being fre-

* Job, c. xxxi. v. 26.

quently

quently concealed from the view of the enthusiastic adorer, invention supplied their place by forming representative images of those fancied deities to whom, after solemnly consecrating them, they paid their devotion with as much fervour as to the real planet. In this practice, as Dr Prideaux * has judiciously observed, we trace the first origin of the *Sabian superstition*, or worship of idols, in which abomination the antient pagan world were so deeply immersed; and, from this period, Saturn, Jupiter, and the other sidereal divinities, continued to be holden in the most sacred veneration through all the periods of the Assyrian, Greek, and Roman, empires. Before these figures, which they invoked by the several names their blind bigotry has assigned them, in deep caverns and woody recesses, the first temples of the world, they performed their mysterious rites; they kindled the sacred fire, of which their glowing spheres seemed to be formed, and they offered oblations to them of the noblest beasts of the field and the choicest productions of the earth. In the wild delirium of

* See Prideaux's Connections, vol. i, p. 178, and, likewise, those of Dr Shuckford, vol. ii. p. 388, who, notwithstanding the severe attacks of Warburton, on this subject of the origin of the various species of pagan idolatry, has displayed erudition little inferior to that of the haughty critic.

their zeal, and under the impulses of a sacred fury, they shouted aloud the lofty pæans of praise and triumph; they mingled in the circular dance, which was intended to imitate that of the planets; and they tried the most potent spells and uttered the most tremendous incantations, in full confidence of drawing down, into those symbolic figures, the same powerful spirits which were supposed to roll them through the æther, and the same bland or baleful influences which they were believed to dispense from on high.

That a considerable portion of the hieroglyphic sculptures and paintings, in the temples of Hindostan, have an astronomical allusion, has never been doubted by those who have accurately surveyed and attentively considered them; though their latent meaning and intricate history have never been completely developed. The blaze of glory streaming from the radiated crowns of the heads of all the AVATARS, whose figures are engraved in the Asiatic Researches, speak their descent from the regions of light and glory; the emblematical ornaments of serpents that deck the venerated statues of the GOD-RAJAHS, who frown on the walls of the various cavern-pagodas; the figures of sacred and sidereal animals sculptured near them; the sacerdotal vases for oblation;

oblation; the consecrated bells which the hands of some statues bear, and the sacred zennar and staff of Brahmins which distinguish others; all these circumstances united evince their immediate connection with the profoundest mysteries of science and with the most awful rites of religion.

We have not yet come to the examination of the antient Egyptian superstitions and their striking similarity to those of India; but, if we cast a digressive eye towards that country and examine the catalogue of her numerous deities, if we attentively peruse the varied page of their history and mark the discriminating features of their several characters, we shall find them, for the most part, to be nothing more than HEROES DEIFIED. Thus, Vulcan, Bacchus, Thoth, Hercules, having, by their skill in arts or their prowess in arms, greatly benefited the early inhabitants of the world; as, for instance, Vulcan, by the invention of the forge, and by instructing mankind in the use of fire; Sesostris, or Bacchus, by teaching them the right method of agriculture and of planting the vine; Thoth, or Hermes, by the invention of letters and the patronage of science; Hercules, by the unparalleled labour of draining the lakes of Egypt and by overthrowing in battle Busiris and its other tyrannic princes, those giants

in power and monsters in vice; by such illustrious exploits these august personages successively rose to immortal honours. The same remark, probably, holds good in regard to India, or even applies with still greater force. If we could divest the history of its most antient sovereigns of the fabulous ornaments, with which adulatory poetry and reigning superstition have decorated them, they would appear to be only a race of dignified mortals, distinguished by their wisdom as legislators, their erudition as philosophers, or their fortitude in battle. Thus RAMA, one of the great incarnate deities, whom the Indians believe to have been an appearance on earth of the *preserving Power*, and whom Sir William Jones takes to be the Indian Bacchus, when stript of his divine honours, will appear to be only the SOVEREIGN OF AYODHYA, a conqueror of the highest renown, and the deliverer of nations from tyrants. Thus Brahma himself, if we may be allowed for a moment to lose sight of the etymology of his name and rend the allegoric veil that shadows his person, might only have been the GODLIKE MORTAL, profoundly skilled in theology and legislation, who first polished a barbarous people, regulated their conduct by an admirable code of salutary laws, and gave energy and stability to an unsettled government.

government. Mr Scrafton is of opinion that Brahma was king as well as legislator ever all the vast continent of India,* and that he intended, by the solemn obligations of religion, to fix the attachment of his subjects to their own country as well as to bind them to the observance of his laws. The learned personage, to whose deep researches into the Indian mythology I have so often had occasion to refer, seems to countenance a similar opinion, when he offers a conjecture that the former deity was in reality *Rama*, the son of *Cush*,† who might have established the first regular government in this part of Asia. The Ayeen Akbery, too, appears to decide the matter, where that book affirms that RAMCHUND was rajah of Owd,‡ in the *Tretah Yug*, and that he united in himself the two-fold office of king and prophet.

But it is now necessary that we should once more direct our attention towards PERSIA.— The profound reverence, before-noticed to have been equally entertained by the Magi of Persia and the Brachmans of India, for the SOLAR ORB and for FIRE, forms a most striking and

* See Mr Scrafton's Reflections on the Government of Hindostan, p. 5.

† Asiat. Research. vol. i. p. 258.

‡ Ayeen Akbery, vol. ii. p. 41.

 prominent

prominent feature of resemblance between the religion of Zoroaster and that of Brahma. Indeed, if any person, deeply skilled in the principles of both systems of theology, were minutely to examine and compare them together, I am convinced, that, except in the dreadful instance of that incestuous commerce allowed his disciples by the Persian legislator, and some peculiar local superstitions practised by the Indians, no very material difference would be found between them. But Zoroaster, according to Ulug-Beg, quoted by Dr Hyde, was the greatest mathematician and astronomer that the East, in those remote periods, ever saw. He had so far penetrated into the great arcana of nature, and had raised the Magian name to such a height, that, in the darker ages which succeeded, they were supposed to possess supernatural knowledge and powers; and hence the odious term of *magic* has been ever since bestowed upon arts that seemed to surpass human power to attain and that of *magicians* upon those who practised them. In the union of astronomy and theology, which were sister-sciences in those days, we shall perhaps find an explanation of those mysterious rites of cavern-worship, the origin and nature of which have so long perplexed the ingenious in their inquiries concerning the

the species of devotion supposed to have been antiently practised in the caverns of SALSETTE and ELEPHANTA.

Whatever might have been the oldest species of devotion originally celebrated either in Persia or India, and, most likely, from human nature being every where open to the same impressions, it was this worship of the Sun, it is probable that Brahma, and it is certain that Zoroaster, only improved upon the popular superstition, rejecting the more gross, and retaining the more refined, parts of the antient rites and ceremonies already instituted in each country. Of Zoroaster there are two opinions; the first is, that he was king of Bactria, and, according to Justin,* lived so early as the days of Ninus, by whom he was slain in battle; the second, and more generally received opinion, is that maintained by Dr Hyde, who asserts, that he flourished in the reign of Darius Hystaspes, about 520 years before Christ, that he was of no very exalted origin, and that he resided in Babylon during the Jewish captivity, where he obtained that intimate acquaintance with the doctrines of the Hebrews which appear so conspicuously in many parts of his ZEND. The learned Drs Hyde†

* Justin, lib. i. c. i.

† Hyde's Hist. Relig. Vet. Pers. cap. xxiv. p. 314.

and

and Prideaux,* in my humble opinion, too far violate probability when they represent Zoroaster to have been himself a native of Palestine, of Jewish parentage, and to have lived a menial servant in the families of either Ezra or Daniel. The profound and various learning which he possessed, supposes a descent far less inglorious and an education far more polished than a mere slave could possibly have enjoyed; and, if he had been a Jew, he would not have neglected to enforce upon his disciples the necessity of that *peculiar rite* which forms the characteristic distinction of the progeny of Abraham. He found the people of Persia immersed in the depth of that gross idolatry, the fire-worship, established by the Magians; for, though they pretended to worship God in the fire, the Deity himself had long been forgotten in the symbol of his worship. He purged their minds of the impure and sensual depravity; he revived among them the principles of that genuine religion, which time, and objects more palpable, had effaced from their minds; he called himself the restorer of the primitive devotion of Abraham, that great and enlightened patriarch so highly venerated throughout all the East; and, as he had read that the Almighty

* Prideaux's Connections, vol. i. p. 213.

spoke

spoke to Moses out of the *burning bush*, and to the whole assembled sons of Israel out of the *fire* that glowed on Mount Sinai; that he had manifested his divine presence to them, on their march from Egypt, under the appearance of a column of *flame*; that he resided in the *luminous glory*, displayed between the cherubim; and that he had commanded a never-dying *flame* to be cherished on the great altar of his temple at Jerusalem, on which the burnt-sacrifices were offered: animated by these circumstances, the artful theologue pretended that he himself had been admitted to a vision of the Most High; and, being taken up into heaven, had been addressed by the Eternal from the midst of a vast and pure circle of surrounding flame. By this plea he justified a practise which he would have found it difficult to crush, he gratified the wishes of the prejudiced, he obtained the approbation of the sovereign, and he effected a change without the hazard of an innovation.

Brahma being, avowedly, a mythologic personage, I can give no historical account of the æra when the code, that bears his name, was acknowledged as the sovereign law of India; for, that is surely inadmissible which Mr Dow's Prefatory Dissertation fixes, viz. 4887 from the year 1769, when that Dissertation was written,

written, and consequently above 4900 years previous to the present year. From the variety of the doctrines of which the sacred volumes of India treat and of the sciences which they discuss; from the clashing, ad, in the instance of sanguinary sacrifices and vindictive incantations, from the absolute contradiction, of the mandates inculcated in them, as well as from their bulk; it is probable that the Vedas were not the labour of one legislator only, but the result of the collective wisdom of ages: the august fabric of many legislators, accommodating themselves, as all legislators occasionally must, to the fluctuating principles of the times, the successive superstitions or the progressive improvement of the people. This idea is, throughout his treatise, maintained by Mr Holwell,* who, from evidence, obtained in India, asserts, that the fourth Veda, in particular, is a publication fifteen hundred years posterior to the other three. This opinion is, I know, combated in the Prefatory Dissertation of Mr Dow,† and by some other writers still more respectable; yet I have solid authority for thinking Mr Holwell's assertion to be founded in truth. The argument in favour of this opinion, advanced

* Holwell, part ii. p. 13. † Dow's Prefat. Dissert. p. 30.

in

in the Asiatic Researches,* is two-fold. The first arises from the very singular circumstance of only three Vedas having been mentioned in the most antient and venerable of the Hindoo writers; and the names of those three Vedas occur in their proper order in the compound word *Rigyajuhsama,* that is to say, the *Reig* Veda, the *Yajush* Veda, and the *Saman* Veda. The second argument is drawn from the manifest difference in the style between the fourth or *Atharva* Veda and the three before named. That of the latter is now grown so obsolete as hardly to be intelligible to the Brahmins of Benares, and to appear almost a different dialect of the Sanscreet, while that of the former is comparatively modern, and may be easily read, even by a learner of that sacred language, without the aid of a dictionary. I am entirely at a loss, without some such supposition, to account for the contradictions just mentioned and many others in the Vedas; for, to enjoin a positive institution in one page, and, in the next, to insert precepts of a direct contrary tendency, in the important article of national religion, argues an inconsistency of which no intelligent Deity

* Asiat. Research. vol. i. p. 346 and 357. See also, on this subject, Mr Wilkins's preface to the Bhagvat Geeta, p. 25, whose argument is decisive.

nor

nor wise legislator could be guilty. Amidst these contradictions, therefore, for the sake of consistency, I am compelled to suppose the existence of such a circumstance, or else some interpolation or mutilation of the Brahmins, who, like the Egyptian priests, kept those sacred books from the inspection of the vulgar, and altered the text, or explained its meaning, as they pleased. The just and benevolent parts I am willing to impute to Brahma, or that first wise legislator to whom we apply that fictitious name; and the arbitrary, the sanguinary, and the contradictory, portions to less-enlightened legislators and to degenerate and mercenary priests acting under their influence. The various detached pieces, of which this vast compendium of theology, ethics, and almost all the other sciences, consist, were collected together, we are informed, at a very antient period, from every part of India, by a great and venerated philosopher of the name of VYASA, who reduced them into their present form, and divided them into four distinct books, which are called the Vedas, or books of SCIENCE; for, that, according to Mr Wilkins, is the proper signification of the word Veda. No regular translation of these books has yet appeared in any European language; but Sir William Jones

Jones has given it as his opinion, that the principal worship, inculcated throughout them, is that of *fire*, particularly the *solar fire*; and, I trust, I have fully proved that the practice of the Hindoos, under the plea of adoring God in that element, is even at this day very strictly conformable to that doctrine. Sir William, in fact, goes beyond this point; for, in the discourse on the literature of the Hindoos, he acquaints us, that "the author of the *Dabistan* describes a race of old Persian sages, who appear, from the whole of his account, to have been Hindoos; that the book of *Menu*, said to be written in the celestial dialect and alluded to by the author, means the Vedas, written in the Devanagari character;* and that, as Zeratusht was only a reformer, in India may be discovered the true source of the Persian religion." While I confess my readiness to bow down to such superior authority, it is necessary I should inform the reader, that most of the antient Greek and Roman writers unite with Justin in placing the age, in which Zoroaster lived, much higher in antiquity. Pliny,† in particular, mentions *a Zoroaster*,

* Asiat. Research. vol. i. p. 349.

† Plinii Nat. lib. xxx. c. 1.

Warburton is decidedly for the high antiquity of *Zoroaster*, and calls all, that Prideaux, and consequently Hyde, has written abou

Zoroaster, who lived "*sex millibus annorum ante Platonis mortem*;" so that probably there were many of that name; and thus both classical and Oriental writers may have adhered to the truth in their various accounts. The above quotation from the Asiatic Researches is of considerable importance in illustrating a subject, upon which I am, at length, about to enter; one of the most perplexing and difficult in the whole extent of Indian antiquities.

By way of introduction to it, let me remark, that the principal fire-temple, and the usual residence of Zoroaster and of his royal protector, Darius Hystaspes, was at Balkh,* the capital of Bactria, the most eastern province of Persia, situated on the north-west frontiers of India, and not very remote from those mountains, which, in Major Rennel's small map, are distinguished by the name of Hindoo-Ko, and which, in classic language, are the true Indian Caucasus. Stationed so near the country of the venerable Brachmans, this bold and judicious reformer would hardly fail of visiting those renowned sages, and of improving his own theological system by the

about him, "an entertaining story, a mere fable." Div. Leg. vol. iii. p. 9, second edition.

* Hyde's Hist. Relig. Vet. Pers. cap. xxiv. p. 320.

addition

addition of whatever was valuable in the Brachmanian institutes of religion. In reality, we are told, by one of the later historians of the Roman empire, that Hystaspes * himself, and most probably not unattended by the illustrious Archimagus, did personally penetrate into the secluded regions of Upper India, and, in disguise, visited the deep solitudes of the forest, amidst whose peaceful shades the Brachmans exercised their lofty genius in profound speculations, and that he was there instructed by them in the principles of the mathematics, astronomy, and the pure rites of sacrifice. These various doctrines, to the utmost extent of their inclination to impart and of his own abilities to retain, he afterwards taught the Magi, all which, together with the science of divination, those Magi traditionally delivered down to posterity through a long succession of ages. That part of India which Hystaspes visited was, doubt-

* Hystaspes, qui quum superioris Indiæ secreta fidentius penetraret, ad nemorosam quandam venerat solitudinem, cujus tranquillis silentiis præcelsa Bracmanorum ingenia potiuntur; eorumque monitu rationes mundani motus et siderum, purosque sacrorum ritus, quantum colligere potuit, eruditus, ex his quæ didicit aliqua sensibus magorum infudit: quæ illi cum disciplinis præsentiendi futura, per suam quisque progeniem posteris ætatibus tradunt. Ammiani Marcellini, lib. 13.

less, Cashmere, where, in all probability, the genuine religion of Brahma flourished longest without adulteration, while its purity, in the southern regions, could hardly fail of being polluted, and its spirit of degenerating, amidst the continual influx of foreign nations and of exotic superstitions from Egypt, Arabia, and all the neighbouring commercial nations. But are there any vestiges remaining in this happy and secluded religion of an original system of devotion, more refined, more benevolent, more consistent with the professed original principles of Brahma's benign religion, than exists any where else in India? If there should exist any such vestiges of the first legislator's genuine and sublime theology, will they not greatly corroborate the arguments I have advanced, principally on the authority of Sir William Jones, Mr Wilkins, and Mr Holwell, of the corruptions introduced into the antient religion of India by subsequent legislators and designing priests of later ages? From the high and respectable authority of Abul Fazil, who, several times, visited, together with the Emperor Akber, that delightful country, and, therefore, wrote not from the reports of others, but as an eye-witness, I can answer, that such vestiges actually *do exist there.* In the account which the Ayeen Akbery gives

of

of Cashmere, there is a very interesting relation inserted of a most amiable race of religious devotees, who are denominated REYSHEES,* and who are said to be the most respectable people of that country. These people, according to Abul Fazil, do not suffer themselves to be fettered by traditions; they revile no sect that may differ from them in religious opinions, nor do they meanly supplicate alms like the wandering mendicants of the south. They abstain from all animal food, they devote their lives to unblemished chastity, and they make it their constant and benevolent employment to plant the road with fruit-trees for the refreshment of weary and fainting travellers. Now, the word REYSHEE signifies, in Sanscreet, a holy person; and, in the principles and conduct of these devotees, may surely be traced the mild, the beneficent, the uncorrupted, religion of the GREAT BRAHMA.

It may fairly be concluded, that Hystaspes was incited, by the representation of his friend and counsellor Zoroaster, to pay this private visit to the Brachmans, and that Zoroaster himself had frequently before visited that "*nemorosam solitudinem*," in which, Mar-

* See the account of them in the Ayeen Akbery, vol. ii. p. 115.

cellinus informs us, they dwelt. It is a conclusion equally fair, that the latter zealously copied the manners and habits of living of those whose austerity and whose wisdom he so ardently admired. When, therefore, we find Zoroaster, as he is represented by Porphyry, in a passage which I shall presently give at length, previously to his assuming the prophetic character, retiring to the gloom of a lonely CAVERN in Media, and ornamenting that cavern with various astronomical symbols and mathematical apparatus, displaying and imitating what he had there probably seen and been instructed in, "*Bracmanorum monitu, rationes mundani motus et siderum*;" when we find him in Persia, reviving, with additional splendour, the antient, but decayed, worship of the SUN and of FIRE; especially, when, upon a more full investigation of the matter, we discover in the mountainous regions of India, which he visited, that the EXCAVATIONS were equally numerous and prodigious; and, in the very midst of those mountains, according to the express words of Abul Fazil,* who had, in all probability, personally examined them in his various excursions with Akber into that neighbourhood, that no less

* Ayeen Akbery, in the Soobah of Cashmere, vol. ii. p. 208.

than "*twelve thousand recesses were cut out of the solid rock,* all ornamented with carving and plaster-work, and remarkable for three astonishing IDOLS; the first, representing a man eighty ells in height; the second, a woman fifty ells in height; and the third, a gigantic child fifteen ells in height;" when we read, that, in Cashmere, after the defection of the inhabitants from their original simplicity and purity of worship, there were no less than "700 places where CARVED figures of a serpent," that antient hieroglyphic emblem of the sun, were worshipped:—on a due consideration of all these circumstances united together, it is impossible to avoid supposing, that, at the period alluded to, the secret mysteries, both of the Hindoo religion and the Hindoo sciences, were performed and taught in the gloom of SUBTERRANEOUS retreats, hollowed for that purpose out of the ROCK, and decorated with similar sculptures and ornaments; that the mystic rites performed in them were those in honour of elementary FIRE; and that the prevailing religion of the nation was the worship of the SUN. This appears to me a more certain clue to guide us through the labyrinth into which we are entering than any other yet devised; and, with this clue, I shall proceed to the immediate con-

sideration of those curious remains of antient industry and genius, which have, through so many ages, excited the admiration of travellers and exercised the speculations of the learned, in the neighbourhood of the English settlements at Bombay.

SECTION

SECTION III.

The Caverns of Elephanta and Salsette described, as well from the most esteemed printed Accounts as from authentic Documents transmitted by living Witnesses to the Author.—The Statues with which they are decorated are, in Part, symbolical Representations of the supreme Deity and his Attributes; and, in Part, deceased Rajahs exalted to divine Honours for their Virtue and Bravery.—The Species of Superstition antiently practised in these Cavern-Pagodas inquired into.—That Worship of a physical Nature.—Exemplified in the constant Appearance of the Phallus, or Lingam, in all the Sacella, or more secret Shrines.—And deeply connected with the Sabian or sidereal Superstition, so widely diffused in the most early Periods over the Greater Asia.

INGENUITY hath been tortured, and conjecture exhausted, by fruitless endeavours to discover at what periods the stupendous caverns, at ELEPHANTA and SALSETTE, were

 hewn

hewn from the native rock, the purposes to which they were originally devoted, and the meaning of the hieroglyphic figures sculptured on their walls. While some writers have imagined them to have been places of retreat and security from an invading enemy, others have considered them as the stony sanctuaries of a religion no longer existing; while others, again, with still less probability, have supposed them to have been the hallowed receptacles of the ashes of the more illustrious dead. English and French writers have equally exerted their critical acumen upon this abstruse subject; but both with success by no means proportionate to the labour bestowed in the investigation. M. D'Ancarville* is willing to ascribe them to Semiramis, when she invaded India, whose king, he says, opposed her at the head of elephants covered with mail, and of troops armed with lances, similar to those on the walls of Elephanta; and he quotes Diodorus Siculus to prove that she caused such memorials of herself to be constructed. According to Dr Fryer, the first Englishman who gives any account of these caverns, the honour of excavating them has been contended for in favour of Alexander the Great, by those who thought his army alone

* D'Ancarville, vol. i. p. 121, 124.

equal

equal to the achievement of so arduous an undertaking; and it is not a little remarkable, that a large and spirited figure of a horse, hewn out of the rock on the island of Elephanta, is really called the *horse of Alexander*.* The third opinion, and full as rational as any of the romantic ones before-mentioned, is that which Ovington and other travellers assert the natives themselves entertain concerning their fabrication; viz. that they were the work of giants and genii in the earliest ages of the world!

As these subterraneous recesses are admitted to be of the most profound antiquity; of such profound antiquity, indeed, that we are unable to obtain any light concerning the particular æra of their fabrication, either from books or from tradition; yet, as there exists at the same time the strongest reason for supposing them to have been originally applied to religious purposes, it seems to follow, as a necessary consequence, that in them was practised the most antient superstition known to have flourished in Hindostan, and that superstition has been demonstrated to have been the worship of the SOLAR ORB and of FIRE. But, with the principles of their theology, we have

* See the account communicated to the Society of Antiquaries, by Alexander Dalrymple, Esq. in the Archæologia, vol. vii. p. 324.

observed,

observed, were deeply blended those of a science which was in that remote period the inseparable concomitant of every theological system, and which, by some intelligent writers, is supposed to have had its origin, and, by all authors, to have arrived at early maturity, in that country. M. Bailly, indeed, in his elaborate treatise on the astronomy of the antients, cedes the palm contended for in honour of India, to Persia, but only for the space of about a century in priority; and, therefore, the general argument remains in force sufficient to justify my asserting, that the principles of that science were once investigated and taught in these caverns with all the zeal which inspired its most enthusiastic vótaries; while the worship of the solar orb and of elementary fire was celebrated in them with all those peculiar appendages of pomp and solemnity, which ever *accompanied*, and, above all others, *distinguished*, that splendid superstition. Without anticipating the arguments, which I intend to adduce in support of this assertion, I shall first present to the reader, as far as a verbal description can avail, (and sorry am I that it is not in my power to accompany that description with explanatory engravings adequate to the importance of these antiquities,) a general view of the caverns and of the sculptures they contain.

I

I shall afterwards proceed to that more particular examination of some of them, upon which I have hazarded certain conjectures concerning the use to which the former were applied, and concerning the probable meaning of the latter.

These rocky shrines, the formation of which Mr Grose* supposes to have been a labour equal to that of erecting the pyramids of Egypt, are of various height, extent, and depth. They are partitioned out, by the labour of the hammer and the chissel, into many separate chambers; and the roof, which in the pagoda of Elephanta is flat, but in that of Salsette is arched, is supported by rows of pillars of great thickness, and arranged with much regularity. The walls are crowded with gigantic figures of men and women, engaged in various actions and portrayed in various whimsical attitudes, and they are adorned with several evident symbols of the religion now prevailing in India. Above, as in a sky, once probably adorned with gold and azure, in the same manner as Mr Savary lately observed in the ruinous remains of some antient Egyptian temples,† are

* See Grose's Voyage to the East Indies, in 1750, p. 92.

† See Savary's Letters on Egypt, vol. i. letter 30, and in p. 451 of the English edition, printed for Robinson, in which the references to classic authors are more accurately made than even in the original French, and this, therefore, is the edition constantly referred to.

seen

seen floating the children of imagination, genii and dewtahs, in multitudes; and along the cornice, in high relief, are the figures of elephants, horses, and lions, executed with great accuracy. Two of the principal figures at Salsette are twenty-seven feet in height* and of proportionate magnitude; the very bust only of the triple-headed deity, in the grand pagoda of Elephanta, measures fifteen feet from the base to the top of the cap; while the face of another, if Mr Grose, who measured it, may be credited, is above five feet in length and of corresponding breadth. Many of these figures, however, have been deeply injured by the fury of Mohammedan and Portuguese invaders of Hindostan. When the latter first arrived in India, in their rage against idolatry, they attempted to annihilate what they thought were the objects of pagan devotion, by plastering over these valuable remains of antiquity: when the Marattas, afterwards, retook Salsette, to remove that plaster, they fired off some cannon in the pagoda, which unfortunately, together with the plaster, brought down some of the bas-relief. Observing this effect of the discharge, they desisted, and with hammers cleared the figures of their degrading invest-

* See Archæologia, vol. vii. p. 334.

ment.

ment, but not without doing material injury to the hands and feet of several. The entrance into most of these caverns is now obstructed by grass and high reeds, which must be burnt before a secure passage can be obtained: they are the resort of the cattle, who feed upon that island when annoyed by the intense beams of the sun or wintry tempests, and are not unfrequently visited by wild beasts and venomous reptiles. Captain Hamilton acquaints us, that, upon his entrance into the pagoda of Elephanta,* he discharged a pistol, on purpose to drive away those dangerous visitants, and that, at the sound, a huge serpent, fifteen feet long and two feet thick, issued from his dark recess, which compelled him and his companions to make a precipitate retreat. One would have supposed that the construction of such astonishing works, which have been called the eighth wonder of the world, would have fixed, in any country, an æra never to be forgotten, since not only a long period of years must have been consumed, but an infinite number of hands must have been employed, in scooping out from the living rock such extensive caverns, and forming, by the slow operation of the chissel, so many and such massy columns. It

* Hamilton's Voyages to the East Indies, vol. i. p. 238.

is, however, very remarkable that no scrutiny however rigid, no inquiry however diligent, either among the neighbouring Brahmins or those living upon the continent, celebrated for learning and penetration, could ever succeed in discovering the immediate sovereign who fabricated them, nor the exact epoch of that fabrication.

Of the various descriptions of these excavations, all of which lie before me, from the first by Linschoten, in the sixteenth century, to the latest published in the seventh volume of the Archæologia in 1785, those given by Ovington and Mr Hunter seem the most accurate among the English travellers, and those of M. Anquetil de Perron and M. Niebuhr among the foreign visitants. From these authors principally, but with occasional reference to others, is the following more particular account of them selected.—Let us begin with Elephanta.

Ovington informs us, that Elephanta* is a small island, three leagues distant from Bombay, and is thus denominated from the statue of a large elephant cut out of the rock, of which the island is composed, conspicuously

* Elephanta, according to De Perron, is called by the natives Gallipouri.

standing

standing on the south shore, and which, in the opinion of another traveller,* (Hamilton,) so nearly resembles a real elephant, that, at the distance of two hundred yards, "a keen eye might be deceived by the similitude." Ovington also describes a horse, carved in the same rock, "so lively, and with such a colour and carriage, that many have fancied it a living animal." An engraving of each is given in the volume of the Archæologia† cited above; but the elephant, according to Mr Hunter, a more accurate inspector of things, is split in two, and there are visible marks of its having been done by gunpowder, probably by the same barbarians who mutilated the figures in the pagoda adjoining. The word *pagoda* is formed from the Persian word *pout*, signifying idol, and *ghada*, temple. Thus pagoda means a temple of idols, and, through this interpretation, we come immediately at the meaning of the hieroglyphics.

This astonishing PANTHEON of the gods, that is, of the *deified heroes and princes of India*, presents itself about half way up the steep ascent of the mountain, from whose stony bosom it is excavated. Ovington states the dimensions of this temple at about 120 feet

* Hamilton, vol. i. p. 241. † Archæologia, vol. vii. p. 287.

square,

square, and the height at 18 feet, and Niebuhr* agrees with Ovington in respect to the height and breadth. The principal entrance is from the north. The enormous mass of solid rock above is supported by four rows of pillars of beautiful proportion, but of an order in architecture totally different from that of Greece and Rome, each column stands upon a square pedestal, and is finely fluted, but, instead of being cylindrical, gradually bulges out towards the centre. The capital is also fluted, and is described by Mr Hunter as having the appearance of a cushion pressed flat by the weight of the superincumbent mountain. Over the tops of these columns there runs a stone ridge cut out of the rock, resembling a beam, about a foot in thickness, richly adorned with carved work. Along the sides of the cavern are ranged those mighty colossal statues before-mentioned, to the number of forty or fifty, each of them twelve or fifteen feet in height, of very exact symmetry, and, although they are as round and prominent as the life, yet none of them are entirely detached from the main rock. Some of these figures have on their heads a kind of helmet of a pyramidal form; others wear

* Sa longueur est d'environ 120 pieds, et sa largeur à peu près de même. Voyage en Arabie, tome ii. p. 25.

crowns

crowns rich in devices and splendidly decorated with jewels, while others display only large bushy ringlets of curled or flowing hair.* Many of them have four hands, many have six, and in those hands they grasp sceptres and shields; the symbols of justice and the ensigns of religion; the weapons of war and the trophies of peace. Some of them have aspects that inspire the beholder with terror, and, in the words of Linschoten, are distorted into such "horrible and fearfull formes that they make a man's hayre stand upright;" others are distinguished by a placid serenity and benignity of countenance; and others betray evident marks of deep dejection and inward anguish. The more conspicuous figures are all gorgeously arrayed after the Indian fashion, with heavy jewels in their ears, with superb collars of precious stones, with belts sumptuously wrought, and with rich bracelets on their arms and wrists. To enter, however, upon a particular description of each figure falls not within the compass either of my intention or of my abilities: the attempt, if practicable, would far exceed the

* Niebuhr has started rather a singular idea upon this subject. "On pourroit prendre pour une perruque ce que l'une d'elles a sur la tête, et conclure, de là, que les Européens ne sont pas les premiers inventeurs de cette coiffure." Voyage en Arabie, tome ii. p. 29.

limits within which I have professed to circumscribe this work. I shall confine my observations therefore to two or three of them, which, being more strikingly prominent, particularly attract our notice and merit more attentive examination.

The first of these is that enormous bust, which is situated on the south side, and directly faces the main entrance, of the cave. Mr Hunter describes this bust as having four heads joined behind the ears; one presenting itself full in front, two in profile, and the fourth concealed from the view by its situation behind that in front. This, however, is an assertion directly contrary to every account I have yet seen, except Mr Hamilton's, whose observations the serpent's appearance prevented from being very correct; and, if Mr Hunter exerted, in this instance, his usual accuracy of examination, it is a circumstance of great perplexity. M. Niebuhr, however, the most faithful delineator of these antiquities, mentions but three heads, and particularly specifies this bust* as exhibiting the representation of the grand triple deity of India, Brahma, Veeshnu, and Seeva.

* "Cette figure principale est un buste à TROIS TETES, qui apparemment devra représenter *Brahma, Vistnu,* et *Madeo,* ou quelqu'autre divinité, à l'honneur de laquelle on ait bâti ce temple." Voyage en Arabie, tome ii. p. 26.

I

I consider the judgement of Niebuhr as corroborated in the highest degree even by Mr Hunter's own description of the symbols and aspect of the three personages who compose it. Let us, however, first consider his account of the dimensions of the august visage in the front. We shall soon perceive, from its astonishing depth and breadth, that it was intended for the image of the supreme presiding deity of this hallowed retreat, and that the sculptor wished to impress us, by the superior magnitude of the *bust only*, with the most awful conceptions of his unrivalled pre-eminence in every other point of view. The face, in the front, measures above five feet in length, and the nose, alone, one foot and a half; the width, from the ear only to the middle of the nose, is three feet four inches; but the stupendous breadth of the whole figure, between the shoulders, expands near twenty feet. The towering pyramidal cap of this central head has, in front, a very large jewel; and the caps themselves of all the three are exquisitely wrought. Round the neck of the same figure is suspended a most magnificent broad collar, composed of precious stones and pearls. This face, Mr Hunter adds, has a drowsy but placid appearance, which may be supposed the exact description of that absorbed state, which, it has been be-

 fore

fore remarked, constitutes the supreme felicity of the Indian deity. The amiable attribute of the preserver Veeshnu is, doubtless, intended to be represented by the face on the right, which is arrayed in smiles, and looks enamoured on a bunch of flowers, perhaps the sacred lotos, which its left hand holds up to view. If ever, on the other hand, the dreadful attributes of the destroying god Mahadeo were accurately portrayed, are they not evident in the monstrous, distorted, and terrific, features of the remaining aspect? The eye-brows of that face are contracted into frowns, the skin of the nose is drawn upwards, and the *alce nostri* distended, expressing contempt and indignation. The face, too, is darkened by whiskers, which the others have not, and the tongue is violently thrust out between the teeth. The right hand of this dreadful figure grasps a large hooded snake, which it holds aloft and surveys with a stern look. The snake is about a foot in thickness; and the middle finger of the hand, which grasps it, Mr Hunter asserts to be three feet and a half in length. Another hand, which is now broken off, appears to have had a snake of the same hooded and enormous kind. If, upon future and more accurate examination, this should be discovered to be a quadruple-faced divinity, in that case

to

to whom can it possibly point, but to BRAHME himself, the GREAT ONE, who in the Asiatic Researches* is represented with four majestic aspects; as the god who not only knows, but observes, all things? If the reader will trouble himself to look into the fourth and sixth plate† of Niebuhr, he will observe two figures, decorated in a very conspicuous manner with the zennar, or sacred cord of three threads, which the Brahmins wear: and this circumstance, added to what has been just asserted, is a sufficient refutation of that ill-founded opinion of Mr Grose and other superficial observers, that the species of devotion, now prevailing in Hindostan, was different from that originally practised in the pagoda of Elephanta. If the head of this bust, however, should, on farther inquiry, prove to be of a quadruple form, the argument will by no means be overset; for, both in plate the fifth and in the sixth, adjoining to the elephant's head, the triple divinity is clearly seen, seated on a throne ornamented with geese, the favourite birds of Sariswatty, the wife of Brahma. The elephant's head had, most probably, the now-effaced

* See an engraving of Brahma in the Asiatic Research. vol. i. p. 243.

† Opposite pages 25 and 27.

 body

body of Ganesa affixed to it; for, thus is that body ornamented in the engraving of that deity in the Asiatic Researches, to which the reader may advert; and it was judiciously placed near the Supreme Being, since, both in that authentic volume and in Holwell,* we find that it was the peculiar office of Ganesa to present to the Deity all the oblations and all the devout addresses of mankind to their Creator. The elephant's head is the emblem of sagacity, and he is styled the god of prudence and policy. Hence even worldly business of any importance is always commenced by an ejaculation to Ganesa, and he is invoked at the beginning of most Indian books; an instance of which occurs in the Heetopades, translated by Mr Wilkins, which opens with, *Reverence to Ganesa.* The two majestic whole-length figures, on each side of the grand bust, are both adorned with the thread of Brahma, and are probably intended to represent the priests of that deity. M. Anquetil de Perron, I observe, calls them SUBDARS.

In a temple of Indian deities, who would have expected to have found AN AMAZON? Yet, farther on to the left of the said bust,

* See Asiatic Researches, vol. i. p. 227; and Holwell, second part, p. 142.

amidst

amidst a group of thirty uncouth statues, conspicuously projects one to whom most writers, and, among them, both Niebuhr * and Hunter, have united in giving that name; and truly she *is an Amazon*, if the general derivation of that word be just;† for, she has no right breast at all, while the left is very large and globular. She has four arms; the right fore-arm rests upon the head of a bull, the left fore-arm hangs down; but what the hand once contained is mutilated, and cannot now be distinguished. The hand of the hinder right-arm grasps a hooded snake; the left, a round shield, regularly convex on the outside, which the statue turns towards itself. As we have exploded the idea of Semiramis having constructed these caverns, from what quarter could the idea of a figure, like this, enter the head of an Indian sculptor? Herodotus acquaints us, that there were *Scythian Amazons*; and, however chimerical the system may appear, I cannot but suspect that it rose from that connection, which, in very early periods,

* "La figure principale de cette grouppe est une femme, qui n'a qu'une mammelle, et qui, peut-être, doit représenter *une Amazone.*" P. 27.

† Amazon is supposed to be formed from the privative α and μαζος, *mamma*, or *breast*; for they used to cut off the right breast of the female.

seems to have existed between the two nations of India and Scythia. Mr Bryant has indeed combated all the assertions of the antients concerning the existence of so extraordinary a race: he insists that the people called Amazons were Cuthite colonies from Egypt and Syria; and, in corroboration of his assertions,* has offered an ingenious derivation of the word *Amazon*, which he would deduce from *Zon*, the Sun, the national object of worship among that people. Allowing this derivation of the word *Amazon* to be founded in propriety, her leaning upon the head of a bull, the animal sacred to the Sun, will appear peculiarly just and characteristic; while the various crowd of mutilated figures around may be supposed in the attitudes of devotion, and adorned with the implements of sacrifice. The whole, however, is an enigma, whose real meaning, from the general mutilation prevailing throughout the figures, will never probably be solved.

In the pagoda of Elephanta there is another very singular and portentous figure, which forcibly arrests the attention of every observer. Its features are distorted and furious, like those of Mahadeo before described, and its limbs are carved in a gigantic style. The mouth

* Analysis of Antient Mythology, vol. iii. p. 463.

is

is wide open, and the whole aspect is inexpressibly savage and terrible. This monstrous statue has eight arms, only six of which are perfect. The two uppermost of those that remain are extended to their full length, and, over its head, support a wide curtain, or canopy, upon which are sculptured various figures in a posture of adoration. One of the right hands grasps a drawn sabre, the other sustains by the thigh an affrighted infant, with the head hanging downwards, whom the relentless monster seems about to destroy. We are informed, as well by M. Niebuhr as Mr Hunter, that, from this circumstance, many travellers have fancied this piece of mythologic sculpture to have been intended for a representation of the judgement of Solomon; a conjecture, however, which they both consider as totally destitute of foundation. Of the two left hands, the uppermost is charged with a bell, which, says Mr Hunter, is known to be an instrument constantly used in the religious ceremonies of the Gentoos; and the inferior supports what Niebuhr* thinks a bason to catch the blood of the murdered infant, but what Mr Hunter affirms,† at the time of his

* "Le plat devroit signifier, qu'il y a reçu le sang des enfans massacrés." P. 30.

† In Archæol. vol. vii. p. 294.

visit

visit to Elephanta, actually contained the mutilated figure of a child, with its face averted from the larger figure, and exceedingly bent; so that the head, which it now wants, must, when joined to the body, have hung back very low, and have exhibited a frightful spectacle. The statue is gorgeously dreadful, with a rich collar of pearl, and bracelets of precious stones to every arm, and is encircled with a chain of *death-heads*, which evidently point out to us once more the destroying power of India, and the husband of that CALLEE, the wild music of whose priests, at one of her festivals, brought instantly to the recollection of Sir William Jones the *Scythian* measures* of Diana's adorers in the splendid opera of Iphigenia in Tauris, exhibited by Gluck at Paris. Above and below this colossal statue are several smaller figures, all of whom have horror strikingly painted upon their countenances. To conclude the disgusting similitude, the veil, or canopy, in which the statue seems to conceal itself from view, may, with justice, be considered as figurative, not only of the gloomy and ferocious nature of the rites peculiar to that vindictive deity, but of the awful season in which they were performed; the darkness of that night, which, Mr Holwell has informed us, is uni-

* Asiatic Researches, vol. i. p. 266.

versally

versally devoted to the worship of Callee throughout Hindostan.

If the sacred *zennar* of Brahma, conspicuous upon so many of the figures engraved in the plates of Niebuhr and the Archæologia; if these striking sculptures of the gods at present adored in India; if the positive assertion of Niebuhr,* that he himself saw the islanders come and pay their devoirs to the deities of this temple; will not convince those of their error, who insist that a species of devotion, totally different from that at this day prevailing in India, was antiently practised in these caverns, let us enter, and survey the secret sanctuary of this magnificent temple, and let us examine what internal evidence that survey may afford to determine the question.

Previously to that survey, however, it is necessary that the reader should be acquainted with another predominant feature in the Hindoo religion, upon which I have not as yet touched, because, in the first place, the subject is not the most inviting, and, in the second place, because it does not appear to have any foundation in the original Vedas attributed to Brahma, which, throughout, inculcate a reverence for FIRE, as the purest

* Voyage en Arabie, tome ii. p. 32.

symbol

symbol of the divinity in the whole extended circle of nature. Imaginations less pure have conceived, and priests, less absorbed in mental abstraction, have elevated, in the very temples of India, a very gross representation of the great celestial Δημιεργος: they have instituted a species of devotion at once degrading to the Creator and dishonourable to his creatures. This species of devotion made an early and rapid progress among the inferior casts, but particularly infected the inhabitants of the Peninsula, whose manners, like the constitution of people situated in warmer climates, seem to have been sooner relaxed and depraved than those of their brethren in the northern and less enervating regions of Upper India. I will not affirm, though it is far from being improbable, that these indecent rites were imported into that Peninsula from Egypt, where the first institution of the worship of *Ithiphallic* images* is asserted, by Diodorus Siculus, to have taken place upon an occasion which I shall hereafter explain, and whence, Herodotus† acquaints us, those rites were carried by Melampus into Greece. For the present, I shall content myself with informing the reader, on the authority of Mr FORSTER,

* Diod. Sic. lib. i. p. 15. † Herodot. lib. ii. p. 123.

who

who has written a concise but elegant treatise concerning the mythology of the Hindoos, that all the numerous sects, into which they are divided, are ultimately included under two grand divisions; the one denominated the *Veeshnu Bukht*, and the other the *Seeva Bukht*. The followers of the first, Mr Forster says,* are distinguished by marking the forehead with a longitudinal, and those of the second with a parallel, line. As, in the great temple of JAGGERNAUT, in Orissa, all distinctions were laid aside, and devotees of every cast, though at other times strictly prohibited from eating together, were permitted to take their food in common; so it is not improbable, that, at ELEPHANTA, the two great sects, distinguished by the names of Veeshnu and Seeva, might forget their accustomed animosity, and worship their several deities with equal fervour.

At the west end of this grand pagoda is a dark recess, or SACELLUM, twenty feet square,

* This valuable little book is entitled SKETCHES OF THE MYTHOLOGY AND CUSTOMS OF THE HINDOOS, and was obligingly lent me, with some other original publications of an Indian kind, by the secretary of the East-India Company. It was printed in 1785, but never published. A publication has lately appeared under a similar title, but on a more extensive scale, by Mr Crauford, an elegant and authentic writer, whose observations are, in general, the result of personal investigation upon the spot.

totally

totally destitute of any external ornament, except the altar in the centre, and those gigantic figures which guard the four several doors that lead into it. These figures, according to Niebuhr, are naked, are eight in number, stationed on each side of every door, and are of the enormous height of thirteen feet and a half; they are all finely sculptured in high relief, and appear as if starting from the wall to which they are attached. Their heads are decorated in a manner similar to the other statues: they have rich collars round their necks, and jewels of a vast size in their ears. Of the striking attitude of one of those statues, which remains most entire, Mr Hunter has recorded the following particulars; that the whole weight of the figure seems to rest upon the right leg, while the knee of the left is somewhat bent; the right humerus hangs downward parallel to the body, and the fore-arm is bent in such a manner that the hand is opposite to the navel; the palm is turned upwards and sustains a GLOBE, and the fingers are bent backwards in a style that admirably represents, or rather makes the spectator *feel*, the weight of the ponderous body they support. He adds a judicious remark, that the people, whoever they were, that carved these figures, must have made considerable progress in the art of statuary, so accurately

accurately to have observed, and so successfully to have expressed, as in many instances they have, the alteration which the form of the limbs undergoes from muscular action and external impulse, as well as the various effects of mental sensation upon the human countenance. These formidable guardians of this sacred recess point out the use to which it was applied and the veneration in which it was holden. It was devoted to the most sacred mysteries of their religion; but our pity and abhorrence are at once excited by the emblem under which they represented, in this recess, the supreme Creator. It is indeed an emblem of deity, which was common in the antient ages of the world, and which, it has been observed,* is but too visible at this day in the various pagodas and paintings of Hindostan. It is, in short, the Φαλλος of the Greeks, the PRIAPUS of the Romans, and in India it is called the LINGAM divinity, by which they mean to express the power of the first creative energy, by whose operations all nature is produced. According to M. Sonnerat,† the professors of this worship were of the purest principles and the most unblemished conduct; and,

* Asiatic Researches, vol. i. p. 254.

† Sonnerat, Voy. aux Indes Orient. vol. i. p. 118.

however

however offensive the idea may prove to Europeans, happily educated under different impressions, it seems never to have entered into the heads of the Indian legislator and people, that any thing natural could be grosly obscene, "a singularity," observes Sir W. Jones, "which pervades all their writings and conversation, but which is no proof of depravity in their morals!"

A fear of offending the delicacy of my readers would induce me to decline saying a word more on the subject of a devotion, at which modesty cannot help revolting; but as, in obedience to the stern mandates of truth, I am reluctantly compelled to give the particulars of this recess, the real purpose of which, and the kind of devotion practised in it, Mr Hunter,* from his calling the altar a *mausoleum*, seems not even to have conjectured, I shall take the liberty of relating those particulars in the words of Mr Dalrymple: that account, extracted by Mr D. from the journal of Capt. Pyke, observes, that "all within was open and plain, except that in the centre stood a square low altar, on which was placed a large polished stone of a cylindrical form, standing on its base, but the top was round or convex." Physics and mythology,

* Archæol. vol. vii. p. 325.

united

united together, at once formed the hypothesis and fabricated the representative emblem. An attentive survey of the powers of nature and her various modes of operation originally gave birth to that hypothesis; for, according to the philosophy of India, " to *destroy* is only to *generate* and *reproduce* in another way." Hence the god of destruction in this country is holden to preside over generation, as a symbol of which he rides upon a white bull. The name and the various attributes of MAHADEO justify our denominating him at once the Magnus Divus; (which is the literal translation of Mahadeo,) the Jupiter Ultor, and the Jupiter Genitor, of the Hindoos. His consort is Bhavanee, the Indian Venus, and, in truth, she has produced as many subordinate deities in India as ever Venus did in Greece or Rome. It may here be remarked, that all the Indian deities have wives; by which, when the characters are purely mythological, we are to understand the active powers of their lords; but SEETA, the wife of the great incarnate god RAM, whose unfortunate adventures, during her captivity by the giant RAVAN, king of Lanca, engross so large a share of the paintings and antient historical poems of Hindostan, was probably a real personage, the wife of a rajah of the same name, after his death dignified with divinity

 for

for the bravery of his exploits against the domestic tyrants and foreign invaders of his country.

In metaphysical speculation alone, I have observed, it is impossible to account for the strange species of devotion above-mentioned, and that still stranger representation of deity; but it is equally possible, that they might have originated in the perverted principles of a mind depraved by sensual gratifications, and that the argument, used in the defence of them, might be posterior to the establishment of the superstition. Reluctant as I am to appear to follow the example of those who labour to deduce from Egypt every antient inexplicable custom and every obscure religious rite of India, yet, of this superstition at least, so diametrically opposite to the tenor of the Vedas, and so directly congenial with the ITHIPHALLIC rites of Egypt, which in succeeding ages were so widely diffused throughout the earth, I am inclined to think those rites were the grand prototype. The early annals of the latter country record the circumstances that gave rise to the institution; and, however deeply blended those circumstances were with their mythologic fables, yet, in an investigation of this nature, it would be improper wholly to omit taking notice of them.

Diodorus

Diodorus Siculus * then relates, that OSIRIS, after his return from the conquest of Asia, was slain by his jealous and enraged brother Typhon, who, after cutting the mangled body into twenty-six pieces, dispersed them in various parts of Egypt. ISIS, his affectionate queen, diligently sought for the dispersed limbs, which after a long search she found, and committed to the care of the priests, instituting at the same time sacred rites in honour of her murdered lord. In memory of this eager and tedious search of the disconsolate queen, at every celebration of the mystic rites of Isis and Osiris, a similar search, with many and bitter lamentations, was affected to be made by the priests, and hence that expression of "*Nunquam satis quæsitus Osiris.*" Not all the anxious inquiry of Isis, however, could for a long time discover the genitals of Osiris, which Typhon had thrown into the Nile. At length the portion of Osiris missing was found, interred with the utmost solemnity, and, in memory of this recovery, Phalli, or poles, (for, that is the meaning of the word Phalli,) with figures of the male pudenda fastened to them, were constructed, and ever after carried about

* Diodori Siculi, lib. i. p. 15.

 in

in solemn procession during the continuance of the festival. Athenæus acquaints us,* that Ptolemy Philadelphus, at one of those magnificent festivals, displayed to the Egyptians a Phallus of gold, richly painted and adorned with golden crowns, a hundred and twenty cubits in length, with a star of burnished gold upon the top, the circumference of which was six cubits. This was borne aloft, like the other idols, on a splendid car, and, like them, received homage from the gazing crowd. This atrocious outrage against decency, this abominable mockery of every thing sacred, under the insulted name of religion, from Egypt spread its infection through all the kingdoms of Asia, and was carried, in Greece, to such a pitch of infamous refinement, that, in celebrating the orgies of Bacchus, according to Herodotus,† they fabricated certain obscene images, a cubit in height, so artificially contrived with nerves, that the *αἰδοῖον*, equal in magnitude to the rest of the body, might be moved at pleasure, and these images the women (those shameless *φαλλοφεραι*) carried about in procession, singing all the time the praises of Bacchus, and dancing to the sound of the flute. He then adds, that it was Melampus who first

* Athenæi, lib. v. c. 5. † Herodoti, lib. ii. p. 122.

introduced among the Greeks the sacrifices in honour of Bacchus, the pomp of the Phallus, and all the other ceremonies of that Egyptian superstition. The vestiges of this antient and nefarious idolatry are evidently traced in the worship of BAAL-PEOR, so frequently and loudly inveighed against by the prophets in various parts of the sacred writings. The word *Baal-Peor* is, according to Bishop Cumberland, derived from two Chaldee primitives, the former signifying *God*, and PEOR, or PAYAR, *denudare*, which he would literally translate the god PRIAPUS,* that obscene deity, born and venerated at Lampsachus, whence he is often so denominated, and concerning whose history and office the reader, if he chooses, may consult Horace,† Ovid, and the other licentious Roman poets.

I am unwilling to dwell upon this indelicate topic, which however is intimately connected with the subject of which I treat; but there appears to be so striking a resemblance between a passage in a profane writer,‡ who relates the cause of the first institution of the

* Cumberland's Sanchoniatho, p. 75.

† Hor. lib. i. sat. viii. v. 3.

‡ For an account of the establishment of the Phallica, see the "Acharnenses" of Aristophanes, act. ii. sc. 1. and the Scholiast upon the passage.

 festival,

festival, called PHALLICA, at Athens, and one in the sacred volumes, that the curious reader will, I am confident, pardon the protraction, especially as I shall afterwards prove, that a custom, similar to that alluded to, at this day exists in India. Pegasus, a native of Eleutheris, in Bœotia, having brought to Athens some statues of Bacchus, was treated by the Athenians with the utmost contempt and ridicule. The deity, indignant at the insult, in revenge, sent among them an epidemic disease of a nature that peculiarly affected those parts which modesty forbids to name. On consulting the oracle upon the best method of preventing the farther extension of so grievous a malady, they were recommended publicly to receive Bacchus into their city in all the pomp of his worship. The oracle was obeyed; and, amidst other splendid trophies, to appease the incensed divinity, were displayed THYRSI, with the figures of the parts affected bound to the end of them. The great critic, M. Bochart, and our Bishop Patrick* after him, assert the whole of this relation to be a direct forgery from a passage in Samuel, where the Philistines, having taken and vio-

* See Bochart's Canaan, lib. i. cap. 18. Bishop Patrick's Commentary on Sam. I. cap. vi. ver. 1.

lated

lated the *ark of the God of Israel*, are smitten with emerods, a distemper, concerning the exact nature of which the commentators are not fully agreed, but which, from the text of verse 9, was doubtless of a similar nature with that before-mentioned. On inquiry of the priests, with what trespass-offering the God of Israel might be appeased, they are desired, among other things, to prepare five golden emerods, according to the number of the principal cities of Philistia, and dedicate them to the God of Israel; which mandate, when they had obeyed, the distemper ceased to make farther ravages among them. The similarity in these two accounts is singularly striking; but there seems to be no necessity that the one should be a forgery from the other, as those learned gentlemen have asserted, especially since it is acknowledged by both, that the antient heathens consecrated to their gods such memorials of their deliverance as best represented the evils from which they were liberated; and, in fact, among the Hindoos, according to Tavernier, it is a custom at this day, that, when any pilgrim goes to a pagod for the cure of any disease, he should bring the figure of the member affected, made either of gold, silver, or copper, according to his

rank and ability, as an offering to the god.* But what the reader will probably think still more singular is, that the worship of the Lingam God is attempted to be explained in the very same way by a Hindoo writer, quoted in the SKETCHES, published by Mr Crauford, which the reader may see there at length, and of which the following is only the outline, viz. That Seevah, incensed against a certain race of devotees, who, under the external appearance of sanctity and austerity, practised secretly the most infamous vices, descended from heaven to punish and expose the hypocritical race. The event was, that, their impiety being as bold as their hypocrisy was base, they attempted to cope with the god of terrors, and by horrible incantations produced a tiger, whose mouth expanded like a cavern, and whose voice resembled thunder, which they sent against the god, who slew the monster with one blow of his club, and then, like another Hercules, covered himself with his skin. Every other effort to revenge themselves upon Seevah failing, they, by the sufference of heaven, sent a consuming fire to

* See Voyage aux Indes par I. B. Tavernier, tome iii. p. 227, edit. à Rouen, 1713.

destroy

destroy the genitals of that god, who, we have seen, is the supreme regenerative power of nature, "Seevah, enraged at this attempt, turned the fire with indignation against the human race, and mankind would soon have been destroyed, had not the preserver Veeshnu, alarmed at the danger, implored him to suspend his wrath. At his intreaties Seevah relented. But it was ordained, that, in his temples, those parts should be worshipped, which the false devotees had impiously attempted to destroy, * This story is an evident compound of allegory and physics, as are all those of Egyptian origin that relate to this curious worship. In fact the pride of the philosopher would fain explain away, by argument, the grossness of a devotion so degrading to the dignity of human nature. While I again assert my belief, that it came from Egypt to India, I, at the same time, declare my conviction, that it originally flowed neither from Seevah, nor Osiris, nor any other fabulous divinity, but from that abandoned HAM, the JUPITER HAMMON of the Egyptians, their first god and first monarch, from whom the whole country in Scripture is often denominated the land of Ham; from

* SKETCHES relating to the Customs of the Hindoos, p. 177.

that

that Ham, who, according to the sense of the word PEOR, above mentioned, was guilty of the horrible enormity of exposing and deriding the nakedness of an aged father, and the base rites of whose prostituted religion are, by the just decrees of Providence, stamped with that eternal brand of reproach, that HIEROGLYPHIC SYMBOL of his crime, which is so well calculated to impress upon the minds of men, and keep alive the memory of that primæval turpitude committed by the most antient idolater and the earliest tyrant after the deluge.

I shall now proceed with the reader to take a general view at the more numerous, and not less astonishing, excavations of CANARAH, in the island of SALSETTE. SALSETTE is a large and fertile island, separated from BOMBAY by only a narrow channel, and is seventy miles in circumference, twenty in length, and fifteen in breadth. Of these excavations the most recent and authentic accounts are to be found in the same volume of the Archæologia above referred to, extracted by Mr Lethieullier from the papers of Charles Boon, Esq. governor of Bombay, and in the preliminary discourse of M. Anquetil de Perron to his famous Zend-avesta. The relations of these gentlemen will be our safest guide amidst

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a labyrinth of mythology, where we shall not have the advantage of M. Niebuhr's accurate and explanatory engravings. M. Niebuhr, when in India, was deterred, as he himself informs us, from visiting Salsette, which was at that period in the hands of the Marattas, by some differences which had recently arisen between the English and that nation.

Governor Boon, laudably employing the power which he derived from his high station to promote the purposes of knowledge, ordered exact drawings to be made, upon the spot, of the principal pagodas and of the more striking figures on this island. These drawings were seven in number, but were never made public; they formed part of the collection of Mr Lethieullier, and, on that gentleman's decease, were purchased for the additional enrichment of the private library of the king: a library, which, for the number of scarce and valuable books and manuscripts it contains, cannot be rivalled by that of any sovereign in Europe, and may be called truly royal. I have denominated these excavations numerous and astonishing; and so the reader will undoubtedly think them, when he is informed, that, according to the representation of Gemelli Careri, who distinctly enume-

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rates them, the figures of idols alone amounted to above six hundred in number, ninety of them in and about the great pagoda, which he tells us may be esteemed the greatest wonder of Asia; and adds, that the person, who took the draughts for Governor Boon, declared he was so struck with the magnitude of that stupendous work, that, "when he attentively considered the whole, he did not doubt but it must have cost the labour of forty thousand men for forty years together."

Near the centre of the island, and embosomed in extensive woods, which are the haunt of lions, tigers, and other wild and venomous animals, rise four very steep and contiguous hills, exhibiting at a distance the aspect of one entire rock, and bearing on their surface strong marks of calcination.* It is on the sides of these hills that the caverns are hewn, and, from the resemblance of the whole to a vass city of stone, as well as from the village of Canarah adjoining, the excavations are denominated by the natives "the city of Canarah."† With this resemblance, Linschotten, who paid this island a visit at so early a period as the year 1759, was so struck, that,

* Archæologia, vol. vii, p, 333.

† Linschotten, b. i. c. 44. edit. 1598.

throughout

throughout his relation, he talks of it as of a town, and calls the excavated apartments *chambers* and *houses*. He describes the front as carved into stories or galleries, leading to so many separate ranges of apartments, all cut out of the live rock, and rising successively above each other, "so that, to be briefe, all the chambers and houses within this compasse, or four galleries, are three hundred, and entirely full of carved pagodes, of so fearfull, horrible, and develish, formes and shapes, that it is wonderful to behold." To give any very minute description of these sculptures is incompatible with my proposed plan; it will, for the present, be sufficient to remark, that these separate apartments have in general an interior recess, or sanctuary, and a small tank, or reservoir of water, for the performance of ablutions. In most of these recesses is displayed the degrading representation of deity before alluded to, "the cylindric stone," described by Mr Dalrymple, "the conic marble," mentioned in the Asiatic Researches,* and often in union, that shocks the eye of modesty, the too evident emblems of the male and female organs of generation.

It is the western hill, which, according to Governor Boon's account, more particularly

* Asiat. Research. vol. i. p. 254.

challenges

challenges attention, since it contains the chief pagoda of the island: in its altitude, but not in its extent and breadth, this pagoda far exceeds that of Elephanta, "being forty feet high * to the crown of the arch, eighty-four feet long, and forty-six broad." The vestibule, or portico, is proportionably large and spacious, and it is adorned with two stately columns, finished with capitals and a base. It is in this portico that the two surprising colossal statues above-mentioned, twenty-seven feet in height and of excellent proportion, are stationed, one on each side, immediately before the entrance into the grand temple; they are adorned with mitre-caps and ear-rings, after the Indian fashion; and, to Mr Boon's artist, they seemed to have been antiently painted, by the tints of blue and vermilion which yet remained upon them. The portico itself has also one very magnificent gate, and two others of inferior magnitude. The superior grandeur of this pagoda seems to arise not only from the height of the roof, but from the circumstance of its being in the form of an arch, whereas that of Elephanta offends the eye, both by its lowness and its flatness. This arched roof is supported by thirty-five massy

* Archæol. vol. vii. p. 335.

pillars,

pillars, extremely beautiful considering their antiquity, of an octagonal form, and about five feet in diameter; the capitals and bases of each being ornamented with figures of elephants, horses, tigers, &c. executed with great skill and exactness. Two rows of cavities, regularly placed, are visible round the walls of the temple, for the insertion of those lamps, which, probably, were kept for ever burning in this gloomy and sacred retreat; but what in a more particular manner, at the very entrance of the temple, irresistibly impresses the mind of the beholder with the most awful conceptions of its former magnificent worship, is the stupendous altar at the farther end of the temple, of a convex form, twenty-seven feet in height and twenty in diameter. Round this high offertory, at certain distances, are recesses for lamps, and, directly over it, expands a vast concave dome. From these numerous and conspicuous recesses for *lamps*, from the general position of those altars towards the *eastern* quarter of the pagoda, from the evidence already brought of the general prevalence among the Hindoos in antient æras of the worship of the sun and of fire, it can hardly be doubted, but that this species of devotion, deriving, perhaps, additional strength from the visible emblem of the deity,

whose

whose throne was supposed to be fixed in the sun, blazed forth in this temple in the fulness of its meridian splendour. Shall I be thought to have violated all the bounds of probability, if I advance one step farther in conjecture, and offer to the public the novel, yet surely not incredible, supposition, that the pagodas, both of Elephanta and Salsette, were of that kind of subterraneous retreats, hewn out of the solid rock, which were so common in Persia, devoted to the splendid rights of MITHRA, and from that deity denominated MITHRATIC CAVES? In those caves they kept a portion of the sacred fire constantly and fervently glowing, The radiant and spotless image of celestial brightness and purity was never suffered to be extinguished, nor even to emit a languid ray, but continually ascended in a pure bright pyramid of flame, fed with the richest gums, with the most fragrant oils, and with the most costly perfumes of the East.

PORPHYRY, in his admirable treatise, *De Antro Nympharum*, treats at large of these Mithratic caves, of the doctrines taught and the worship celebrated in them; he expressly says,* "that the most antient of the human

* Porphyrius in Antro Nympharum, p. 263. Cantabrigiæ, 1655.

race,

race, before they were sufficiently skilled in architecture to erect temples, consecrated cells and caverns to the Deity;" and, what is more particularly to our purpose, he adds, παντακε δε οπε τον ΜΙΘΡΑΝ εγνωσαν, δια σπηλαιε τον θεον ιλευμενων, that is, wheresoever men acknowledge MITHRA as the supreme divinity, they performed the sacred rites in caverns. This account, indeed, appears inconsistent with what we read of the PYRÆIA, or fire-temples, which were generally erected on the summits of mountains; but these are of far later date than the periods to which Porphyry alludes, and owed their origin, according to the magi, to the zeal of Zoroaster, to preserve the sacred flame, which descended from heaven, from extinction by the tempestuous violence of storms and rain. But these caverns were not only the temple of the most splendid religion, they were the solemn schools of the sublimest sciences inculcated in these early ages of the world. What was the science principally inculcated in them, besides theology, we may learn from the same Porphyry in his description of the cave of Zoroaster: that it was consecrated to the honour of MITHRA, the parent of the universe; that the cave represented the world created by MITHRA; and that the elements of nature, and the various

quarters of that world were represented by different symbols properly disposed around it. The SUN was probably represented by a sphere of gold, or some resplendent gem of immense value, suspended aloft; and, the roof, glittering with gold and azure and with well-imitated representations of the celestial bodies, inspired the enthusiastic soul of the Brahmin as well with the most elevated conceptions of his own religion as of the high dignity of his distinguished order. If the scenes of the SACONTALA* be picturesque of the manners of the times in which that drama was written, there cannot be entertained a doubt, but that, upon certain occasions, also in those caverns were practised the most mysterious rites of MAGIC, and that they sometimes echoed with the most tremendous incantations.

The assertion of PORPHYRY, relative to the original purpose to which the MITHRATIC CAVES were applied, is strongly corroborated by a passage in CELSUS, quoted by Origen, where that learned writer informs us, that, in the rites of MITHRA, the Persians represented by symbols the two-fold motion of the stars, the fixed and the planetary, and the passage of

* "Who, like the choleric DURVASAS, has power to consume, like raging fire, whatever offends him?" Sacont. p. 40.

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the soul through them. By way of illustrating this doctrine of the sidereal Metempsychosis, they erected in their caves a high ladder, on the ascent of which were seven different gates, according with the number of the planets; the first gate was of *lead*, which was intended to mark the slow motion of the planet SATURN; the second gate was composed of *tin*, by which they shadowed out the brilliancy and softness of VENUS; the third gate was of *brass*, which they imagined a just emblem of the solidity and durability of JUPITER; the fourth gate was of *iron*, by which MERCURY was typified, because he is suited, like iron, to all sorts of labours, whence profit may be derived; the fifth gate consisted of a *mixed mass*, of which the heterogeneous composition, variableness, and irregularity, rendered it the fit emblem of MARS; the sixth gate was of *silver*, exhibiting an apt similitude of the mild radiance of the silver empress of THE NIGHT; and the *seventh* was of *gold*, a proper emblem of the SUN, the one being the king of metals, and the other being the sovereign of the sky." I must again repeat, that this notion, of the orbs of heaven being *animated intelligences*, was intimately blended with the most antient superstition of the earth; *

* Celsus apud Origen contra Celsum, lib. iv.

we find it particularly predominant in the Phœnician Cosmogony of TAUT, which asserted their ZOPHESAMIN, or the *Overseers* of Heaven, to be thus animated,* and the reader will remember a remark quoted before from the Ayeen Akbery, † that many of the antient Hindoo philosophers believed "that the stars were the souls of men departed this life, and raised to that high dignity in reward for their virtues and austerities."

It was, then, in periods when the solar worship, in this part of Asia, flourished in the zenith of its glory, that THESE CAVERNS were scooped out of the native rock, with that indefatigable labour and with that presevering patience which devotion could alone have inspired, and which the hopes of eternal reward could alone have supported. It was in these solemn retreats of religion and philosophy that the contemplative and *absorbed soul* approached nearest to the perfection of the divine nature; it was *here* that the bright emblem of the divinity beamed forth a lustre insupportably resplendent and powerful; but particularly at that awful season, when the world was deprived of the blessing of the li-

* Cumberland's Sanchoniatho, p. 42.

† Ayeen Akbery, vol. iii. p. 11.

ving

ving solar orb, and when nature lay buried in profound silence and in midnight darkness. If as Mr Hamilton informs us,* from ocular survey, no less than a hundred lamps were preserved incessantly burning before the idol JAGGERNAUT, how many thousand must have been lighted up in the extensive caverns of Salsette and Elephanta? It is probable, that in the day-time the Brahmins mounted the eminences of their rocks, and paid their devotions on the summits of the loftiest mountains. They ascended the heights of Salsette, as the Egyptian priests of old ascended the apex of the pyramids, *to adore the Sun, and to make astronomical observations.* Accordingly, we are informed, by some accurate observers, that, from the eminence of the rocky steep of CANARAH, to which there is a regular ascent of steps cut out of the rock, a prospect opens itself beyond description beautiful and extensive, and that it is an eminence not to be looked down from without terror. M. Anquetil expressly says, that, to him, one of the mountains of Canarah seemed to be hewn to a point by human art, undoubtedly from the same religious impulse that dictated the form of the pyramids of Egypt, which the learned Greaves insists

* Hamilton's Voyage, vol. i. p. 385.

were not *sepulchres*, as has been generally supposed, but stupendous temples,* erected to OSIRIS, the Egyptian appellation of the Sun, the Egyptians imitating in their fabrication of them the model of the solar ray, and the usual form under which the Deity was in the most antient times worshipped. They were, indeed, denominated pyramids απο τȣ πυρος, from the figure of a flame of fire; and a superstition congenial with their name was once undoubtedly practised in their gloomy retreats. When the immediate object of their veneration was lost to their view, the Brahmin devotees descended with the shades of evening into their stony recesses, and *there* renewed (before objects emblematical of his apparent figure, power, and properties) their fervent adoration. THE ORB OF RADIATED GOLD, THE BRIGHT SPIRAL FLAME, ascending from the ever-glowing altar, impressed their inmost souls with an awful sense of the present Deity. The planetary train was represented by images equally emblematical of their supposed form and influence, and the signs of the zodiac blazed in imitative gold round the embossed and vaulted roof. Imagination cannot avoid kindling at

* See an account of a visit to Canarah, by some members of the council of Bombay, inserted in M. Anquetil's account.

the scene, and it is difficult to refrain from rushing into the enthusiasm of poetry, while we take a review of the probable splendour and magnificence of this antient species of devotion. All the caverns might truly be called PYRÆIA, or sanctuaries that cherished the eternal flame. The whole circumference of the rock was illumined and the mountain burned with fire! Throughout all the deep recesses of its caverns for ever reverberated the echoes of the hallowed CONQUE OF SACRIFICE. Around all the shores of the island THE SACRED BELL of religion incessantly rang. The secret gloom of those majestic forests that surrounded the rock perpetually resounded with the MYSTIC SONG of prayer and thanksgiving. One order of priests, arrayed in vestments of WOVEN BARK,* and having on their heads those pyramidal caps, which equally distinguished the Indian and the Egyptian priests, and which, M. Savary informs us, are at this day worn by the latter, attended to watch the never-dying flame, and invigorated it by the frequent injection of precious gums and aromatic woods. Another order of priests was employed in preparing the various sacrifices. Some were occupied in instructing the young-

* See the SACONTALA throughout.

er Brahmins in the profound arcana of those more abstruse sciences, of which the numerous emblems on every side so conspicuously attracted the attention, while others again were initiating them into the mysterious rites of that religion, of which the principal deities were sculptured on the walls of their caverns. No doubt many of these sculptures, which cannot now be explained, shadow out the sacred history of the Indian religion as well as the heroic feats of the antient rajahs. They may exhibit the contentions of the benevolent and malignant Dewtahs. They may display the triumphs of persevering piety over vice armed with giant-terrors, and of justice over oppression, though throned in the plenitude of its power, and arrayed in all the gorgeous ensigns of usurped sovereignty. This appears to me the most certain clue to the explanation of the greatest part of the carved imagery; and exactly in this manner were the innumerable mythologic figures that crowd the walls of Elora, near Dowletabad, explained to M. Anquetil by the two Brahmins who attended him thither for the purpose of throwing light upon this obscure subject. Mr Dalrymple's account, in the Archæologia, greatly strengthens this conjecture; for, the writer clearly discovered "the effigies of great persons compelling

pelling their subjects to obedience; others executing justice; others, as he conceived, by the mildness of their aspect, shewing tenderness in their admonitions; and others again exhibiting instances of their proud prowess in arms." While virtue and science kindled at these examples, ever present to their view, while devotion was animated by the awful presence of the deities addressed, how ardent must have been the throb for distinction which the former felt, how energetic the ejaculations of the latter! Every tongue uttered the dictates of wisdom, and every heart bounded with the transports of religion.

SECTION

SECTION IV.

The Parallel between the physical and symbolical Superstition of India and Egypt commenced, preparatory to a more extensive Survey in a future Section. — The Origin and History of Hieroglyphic Designation. — Those of India and Egypt compared. — Have nearly all an astronomical Allusion. — The principal Deities of either Country and their Functions compared. — The Cavern-Rites of Mithra practised in both. — A stupendous Excavation in the Thebais, with a Sacrifice to the Sun sculptured on the Walls. — The Whole to be referred to a Chaldaic and Sabian Origin.

LEST the assertions in the preceding pages should appear to some of my readers to be of too general a nature, and lest I should be supposed to have substituted eloquent declamation in the place of historical fact, I must now intreat their permission to descend to certain particulars, that will elucidate what has

has been there observed; and consider the first origin, primitive intent, and progressive improvement, of HIEROGLYPHIC SCIENCE. The subject, as it relates to India, has never before been extensively discussed; and, if their patience be not totally exhausted, some interesting matter will perhaps occur, in the course of the investigation, to gratify curiosity and reward attention.

That many of the hieroglyphic sculptures in the caverns of Salsette and Elephanta bear a reference to the astronomical as well as to the mythological notions prevailing in India, cannot be doubted by any body who considers how intimately, in the antient world, these sciences were connected, or rather that their mythology, in a great degree, rested upon the basis of their wild astronomical speculations. It has been asserted by the antients, and the assertion has been received with implicit confidence by the moderns, that HIEROGLYPHICS were invented by the priests of Egypt, to shade, under a veil of impenetrable mystery, the sublime arcana of their theology and philosophy; that these hieroglyphic, or allegorical, characters were the first written language of mankind, and were the undoubted origin of alphabetical letters. Hence Kircher on this subject declares, *De primævis Egyptiorum litteris va-*

riæ

*riæ diversorum sunt opiniones. Omnes tamen in hoc consentiunt, plerasque ex sacrorum animalium forma, incessu aliarumque corporis partium sitibus et symmetria desumptas.** A writer of the present century, however, not inferior in genius to the most learned of the antients, who has devoted the greater part of his second volume of the Divine Legation of Moses to the elucidation of the obscure history of hieroglyphics, and, in particular, of those of Egypt, to which country our subject at present naturally directs our attention, strenuously contends, that emblematic painting was the first as well as readiest method which mankind adopted to communicate their conceptions to each other. He exemplifies his new theory by exhibiting an engraving† of a Mexican picture, copied from Purchase, which contains the history of an antient king of Mexico, during a period of fifty-one years, highly curious and full of emblematic figures. He corroborates that theory by affirming, from a Spanish writer, that, when the inhabitants of the coast of South America sent expresses to Montezuma concerning their first invasion by

* Œdip. Ægypt. vol. iii. p. 42.

† See that engraving, vol. ii. p. 67, of the Divine Legation of Moses demonstrated.

the

the Spaniards, their advices were delineated in large paintings upon cloth. Hieroglyphic figures of animals and other objects, in imitation of those paintings, he represents as the next gradation in the mode of communicating information; and, when these were established, though he will not allow them to have been *invented*, he admits them to have been *employed*, by the artful policy of the Egyptian priests, for the purpose of concealing the more sacred mysteries of their superstition, as well from the eyes of the vulgar among their own countrymen as from the scrutinizing curiosity of learned foreigners. Whatever might have been the real origin of hieroglyphics, and this seems to be the most rational account of it, the same policy, in order to render them more august and venerable, led those priests to represent them as fabricated by the immediate inspiration of the gods, whose rites and mysteries they typified. The stupendous system of the Egyptian religion and sciences soon became involved in the holy gloom of hieroglyphics. The vestibules, the walls, the roofs, of their temples, were covered with these mystic symbols, shadowing out, under the figures of animals and other expressive emblems, the history of their greater and tutelary deities, as well as that of their kings and legislators,

legislators, and indicative of the revolutions and influences of the host of heaven. As in the Egyptian so in the Hindoo temples, near to the deity were generally placed the animals sacred to that deity, which gradually becoming his representative symbol upon earth, in time succeeded throughout Egypt to the honours the deity enjoyed, and, even in India, were treated with respect bordering upon veneration. On this point I cannot help agreeing with Shuckford, in opposition to Warburton, that here we may plainly discover the origin of that worship, so degrading to human nature, which was paid in antient pagan times to the brute creation; but, as that kind of worship was never very predominant in Hindostan, I shall not particularly enlarge upon the subject, though some of its striking features will naturally meet our view in the course of this investigation. Thus, in the former country, the Apis was the known symbol of *Osiris*, and was accordingly worshipped. The White Bull, according to Sir William Jones, is the animal on which *Seeva** is represented in the Indian pagodas;

* Casting my eye, during the period of writing this dissertation, upon Mr Costard's laborious attempt to trace, to Oriental primitives, the Greek names of the several planets, I observe, that,

pagodas; and this may be one cause of the general homage paid to that animal in Hindostan, although, take away the allegory, and it will be found, that both are only venerated for their great use in agriculture. A *cat* was in Egypt considered as a symbol of the *moon*, and Plutarch* gives this curious philosophical reason for it; they thought that the contraction and the dilatation of the eye of that animal afforded a just emblem of the increase and decrease of the moon's orb. The representative symbol of the moon in India. according to the Heetopades† and Mr Wilkins, is a

that, in examining the appellation Ζευς, or JUPITER, he produces two Chaldee verbs, which he translates *Sevah* and *Seve*, signifying *to exult for joy;* either of which, he says, might be its possible radix. He then traces the same word to an equally possible radix in Arabic, which he writes *du* or *dsu*, signifying Lord, or one that possesses; with which, he adds, "very nearly agrees the *dyu* of the Welsh, the *deu* of the Cornish, and the *deus* of the Latins;" to which may probably be added the *div* of the Hindoos. This name Mr Costard thinks might suit the character of the prince, but the name of the *planet* he would deduce from *dha*, lux, lumen, splendor, which might be the primary meaning of the Chaldee *Sevah*. If the above derivation be not too far-fetched, it will help to unravel the history of this god, who, we have before observed, has been denominated the *Jupiter Genitor* of India. Costard's Astronomy, p. 193.

* Plutarch in his Treatise de Iside et Osiride, p. 360, which treatise developes all the complicated mysteries of that worship.

† See Heetopades, p. 177, and note.

rabbit,

rabbit, which animal constantly ornaments the right-hand of the representative images of that deity, drawn or sculptured in the pagodas. A serpent was adored in Egypt as the emblem of the divine nature; not only, says Warburton, "on account of its great vigour and spirit, but of its extended age and revirescence;" and we have observed from the Ayeen Akbery, that, in Cashmere, there were no less than seven hundred places, where carved figures of snakes were worshipped; indeed almost all the deities in Salsette and Elephanta either grasp serpents in their hands or are environed with them, which can only be intended as a mark of their divinity. They are also sculptured on the cornices surrounding the roofs of those caverns and the more modern pagodas; a circumstance which reminds me of another use to which serpents were applied in the symbols of Egypt; for, their wreathed bodies, in its hieroglyphic sculpture, represented the oblique course of the stars, while the same bodies, formed into a circle, were an embiem of eternity; and it will be remembered, that the serpent was one of the most conspicuous of the forty-eight great constellations, into which the antients divided the visible heavens. On those cornices too, in embossed work, are seen very conspicuous

spicuous figures of horses, elephants, and lions, three of the most distinguished constellations of the Hindoos; the two former of which stand foremost in order among those enumerated in Mr Costard's table * of the twenty-seven constellations, of which the zodiac of the Indians consists, called ACHEVINI and BARANI; literally, the horse and the elephant; while the third, or SING, is that favourite sign of the same zodiac, which gives the additional honour of its name to that of every brave rajah, who chooses to be distinguished on the roll of fame for possessing the fortitude of a LION. † These symbolic animals, probably, in the antient mythological system, represented the renowned hero-deities of India in the same manner as in Egypt the god Horus was recognised in Orion, Anubis in Sirius, or the Dog-star, Typho in Ursa Major, or the Bear, and Nephthe in Draco, or the Dragon. It was this close union of the Hindoo theology and astronomy which deceived that elegant and judicious historian, Mr Orme, ‡ when he declared, that the history of their gods was a heap of the greatest absurdities. "It is, says he, Eswara twisting off the

* Costard's ASTRON. p. 5. † As CHEYT SING.

‡ Orme's Hindostan, vol. i. p. 3.

neck of Brahma; it is the Sun who gets his teeth knocked out, and the Moon who has her face beat black-and-blue at a feast, at which the gods quarrel, and fight with the spirit of a mob." These celestial combats, represented at various festivals in India, doubtless allude to the conjunction or opposition of the constellations; and the assertion of Mr. Wilkins, that, on every eclipse, the Hindoos believe those planets to be seized upon by a large serpent, or dragon, which assertion is supported by two passages of the Geeta * and Heetopades,† in the strongest manner corroborates the supposition. I cannot pass by this inviting opportunity of demonstrating the very striking similarity in sentiment, subsisting, upon this as well as upon many other occasions, between the Hindoos and the Chinese, proving either an original descent from the same common ancestor, or a most intimate connection between those nations at some remote æra. The Jesuit Le Compte, giving a description of a partial eclipse of the sun, which he observed in China about the end of April, 1688, informs us, that, during the whole of the eclipse, the Chinese were under

* Bhagvat Geeta. p. 149.

† Heetopades, p. 28, and note, p. 299.

the

the greatest alarms, imagining they were going to be suddenly enveloped in thick darkness, and made every where the most hideous yelling and horrid noises *to oblige the dragon to depart.* "For, to this animal," he adds, "they attribute all the disappearances of the stars which take place, because the celestial dragon, being hunger-bitten, at that time holds the Sun or Moon fast between his teeth, with intent to devour them." *

The whole of this curious relation exhibits to us, not only decisive evidence of the early proficiency of the Hindoos and Chinese in the science of astronomy, but a glaring proof how deeply, and at what remote periods, their astronomical and theological speculations were blended together, and, as it were, interwoven.—To explain the allusion, it is necessary that the reader, not conversant with astronomy, should be informed of the following circumstance, to which I request his attention, as it will be of material use towards understanding many parts of the Indian astronomical mythology that will hereafter occur. The two points in the heavens, where the moon's apparent orbit cuts the ecliptic, are

* Le Compte's Memoirs of China, p. 480. English edit.

called the MOON'S NODES. The point where the moon appears to cross the ecliptic, during her passage into north latitude, is denominated her ASCENDING NODE. On the other hand, the point in the heavens, at which the moon crosses the ecliptic, during her passage into south latitude, is called by astronomers her DESCENDING NODE. To the circular curve, thus described by the moon's orbit, the fancy of the antient Asiatic astronomers assigned the figure of a serpent, as indeed they did to the path of the sun through the signs of the zodiac, which, in Eastern hieroglyphics, is represented by a circle of intertwining serpents. Serpens and Draco are terms that in astronomy are synonymous, and it is, therefore, according to Dr Long, whose account of the nodes I have followed above,* that the Arabians give the appellation of *dragon's bellies* to those parts of the orbit of the moon where she makes the greatest deviation from the line of the ecliptic. This is customary with them at this day, and proves that they derived their astronomical notions from the same fountain with the Indians and Chinese; I mean their ancestors of the old Chaldæan school. The

* See Dr Long's Astronomy, vol. ii. p. 361.

moon's

moon's ascending node is therefore called the DRAGON'S HEAD, and her descending node the DRAGON'S TAIL. But we see that the allegorical allusion of the rapacity of the celestial dragon is likewise extended to the sun, as indeed it may be to any planet, by whose passing orbit the ecliptic is, at any time, and in a similar manner, intersected, and from ideas of this kind undoubtedly have arisen all those ridiculous tales of the contests of those celestial combatants. As an illustration of what has been just observed, I have annexed a representation of the real astronomical figure made by the moon's orbit in passing the ecliptic, and of the hieroglyphic emblem to which it indisputably gave birth.

It may here be remarked that no *eclipses* can happen, except when the two planets are in or near the nodes or intersections of the *ecliptic*, whence indeed that great circle derives its name. This portion of the heavens, therefore, has been in all ages the object of more particular observation of the speculative race of philosophers, and it is in this region that infidelity has been too fatally busy in forming calculations and erecting hypotheses subversive of the Mosaic theology and hostile to the dearest interests of mankind. I shall,

 hereafter,

hereafter, have occasion to evince that it is chiefly, if not solely, on calculations founded upon the retrograde motion of these nodes from east to west, that is, in an order contrary to that of the signs, and the slow, but now-demonstrated, decrease of the obliquity of that ecliptic, after the rate of a degree in one hundred years, that all the antient atheistical systems, asserting the immense duration of the world, have been founded. On a minute examination of them, we shall probably discover that they are erected upon a basis scarcely less chimerical than the fable of the celestial dragon, who, upon every lunar eclipse, is supposed by the Hindoos and the Chinese to seize with his teeth that affrighted orb. In the astronomical figure subjoined, number 1 denotes the moon in her ascending node, number 2 presents the planet in her descending node, numbers 3 and 4 mark that wide portion of the serpentine curve, which, in the Arabian astronomy, is called the belly of the dragon. By the dragon, Dr Long observes, the antients did not mean that fictitious and monstrous figure with wings, which we see presented in modern paintings, but simply a large snake, as delineated below, by a comparison of which with the former mathematical figure

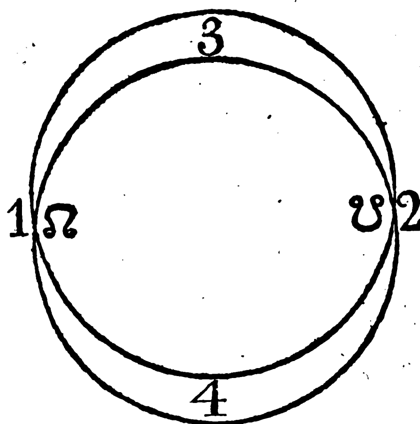
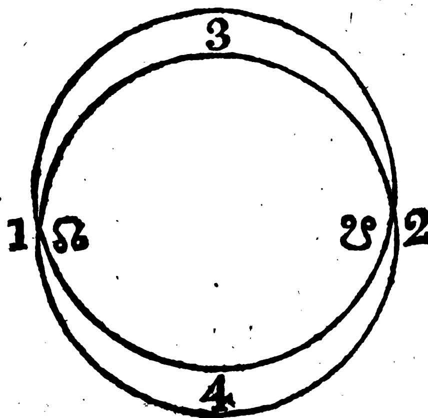


figure we so plainly trace the progressive union of their astronomical speculations with their hieroglyphic theology.



 The

The Brahmins of India and the Bonzes of China, to impress with awe and veneration the inferior classes of mankind, purposely veiled under obscure enigmas their deep astronomical discoveries, and invested science with the mantle of hieroglyphics. With what unwearied assiduity astronomy itself was antiently pursued in both countries, those massy marble instruments, erected in the observatories of Pekin and Benares, to be seen, the former in Du Halde, the latter in the Philosophical Transactions, and with correct engravings of which that portion of this work, which treats of their literature, will be decorated, remain perpetual and irrefragable testimonies. I shall, hereafter, in my review of Oriental astronomy, have occasion to remark how deeply these astronomical pursuits influenced all the national habits and opinions of Eastern people; how intimately they were blended with all their systems of theology, and even infected their solemn codes of legislation, in which we should least of all expect to find the operations of fancy to predominate. Of all the phænomena of astronomy, none, however, excited more general dismay and astonishment, throughout all the nations of the pagan world, than eclipses. The moon was thought, during those solemn periods of public alarm,

to

to be struggling in laborious toils, and, to assuage her pangs, in that moment of magined distress, while the Chinese rent the air with the sound of cymbals, trumpets, and the clanging of less melodious instruments, the whole affrighted nation of the Hindoos crowded to the banks of the Ganges, and other sacred rivers, and anxiously endeavoured, by universal ablution in their streams, to prepare themselves for the destiny which they thought rapidly approaching.

As another evident proof how early and how deeply the antient Indians were engaged in astronomical pursuits the reader will permit me to remind him of what has already been remarked from Mr Halhed, that the days of the week are named, in the most antient and venerable Sanscreet books, from the very same planets to which they were assigned by the Greeks and Romans. Their names, as they stand in that gentleman's publication, are AUDEETYE WAR, or Solis dies; SOME WAR, or Lunæ dies; MUNGEL WAR, or Martis dies; BOODHE WAR, or Mercurii dies; BREEHESPET WAR, or Jovis dies; SHOOKRE WAR, or Veneris dies; and SHENISHER WAR, or Saturni dies. I must here observe that these names of the seven planets, over each of which a god presides, are very differently

differently written by M. Sonnerat, as the reader may see in page 170 of the first of his instructive but costly volumes, * as indeed are almost all the names of the Indian divinities, from the mode of writing them in the Asiatic Researches, and by Mr Wilkins, a circumstance which has often been to me the occasion of some perplexity, since I could only discover them by their functions to be the same deities. M. Sonnerat has, in the same page, supplied me with a remarkable proof of my recent assertion, that the various conjunctions and oppositions of the planets, their approaches towards the earth, and their retrogradations, are, among the Hindoos, the perpetual source of rejoicing or alarm. "SANI, or Saturn,"

* I have, with good reason, mentioned the publication of M. Sonnerat as costly though instructive and ingenious. For the two quarto volumes, of which it consists, I paid Mr White three guineas and a half; and, to give the reader some faint idea of the expense which I have been at on account of this publication, I shall insert below the prices of only a few of these foreign authors upon Oriental subjects, antiquities, geography, and astronomy. Antiquité expliquée, 15 tom. 15l. 15s. D'Ancarville, Recherches, &c. 3 tom. 3l. 18s. Voyages de Niebuhr, 4 tom. 5l. 5s. D'Anville Antiquit. Géograph. 1l. 5s. Kircher's Œdipus Egyptiacus, 4 tom. 4l. La Lande Astronomie, 4l. 4s. &c. &c. &c. Besides the most expensive of our English authors on Indian and Oriental Antiquities, as the Asiatic Researches, 2 vol. 5l. 5s. Pocock's Egypt, 2 vol. 4l. 4s. &c. &c. &c. &c.

says

says this author, "is the god who inflicts punishment on men during this life; he approaches only to annoy them; Saturday is the day of the week sacred to him. The Indians entertain dreadful apprehensions concerning him, and offer to him conciliatory prayers. He is represented as of a *blue colour*; he has four arms; he is mounted upon a *raven*, and is surrounded by two serpents, whose intertwining bodies form a *circle* round him." The raven, I must remark, is a bird of ill presage, and how it came originally to be esteemed all over the Oriental world will be clearly manifested when we shall arrive at the history of the true Saturnian patriarch. The serpents, forming a *circle* round the orb of Saturn, doubtless indicate the vast *ring* which surrounds that planet; and, if this mythological delineation of Saturn be of any remote date, it is a still farther proof of their early discoveries in astronomy, since the phænomenon of Saturn's ring was, according to Dr Long, never promulgated to European astronomers before the time of the great Huygens, who first published his *Systema Saturnium* in 1659.*

I shall presently enter upon a more extended and particular inquiry into the theological and

* See Long's Astronomy, vol. ii. p. 714.

metaphysical

metaphysical doctrines taught in the caverns of India, and endeavour to ascertain the æra in which, and the race by whom, they were originally fabricated. That they *were* caves in which the mysteries of Mithra, or mysteries very much resembling those of Mithra, were antiently performed, has, I trust, been proved both from the analogy in religion between the old inhabitants of Persia and India, in their general veneration of the SUN and FIRE, as well as from the similitude of the structures and ornaments of these caverns with those of the rocky temples, excavated, in honour of Mithra, in the mountains of Persia and Media. It appears to me that MITHRA and SURYA are the same mythologic being, and that the SAURAS and the PERSEES are sects only different in name. The former appellation is asserted by Kircher to be the same with Mithraim, or Misraim;* and, if we could allow that derivation to be just, we should not long be perplexed concerning the origin of his worship, since Misraim was the first-born son of the idolatrous Ham. Others, however, have, with more probability, derived the name from an Oriental primitive, signifying *a rock*, an etymology very corres-

* Œdip. Egypt. tom. i. p. 218.

pondent

pondent with his origin; for Mithras, in the Persian mythology, is said to have been born of a stone, by which was allegorically denoted the FIRE emitted by the collision of two flint-stones: *semina flammæ abstrusa in venis silicis.* Plutarch, possibly from some Oriental fable, has improved upon this allegory; for, he acquaints us, that Mithra, born of a stone, and desirous of having offspring, copulated with a stone, whence was born a son named Diorphos, LIGHT. Mithra, in the same vein of allegory, is said, by Porphyry, to have been A STEALER OF OXEN, which he secreted in caverns; intimating at once that the sun, like the ox, was the emblem of fertility, and that his prolific and generative heat produced that fertility by secret and invisible operations.

It is very remarkable that, according to a passage in Eusebius, quoted by Mr Bryant,* Osiris himself was, by the antients, sometimes called SURIUS, Οσειριν προσαγορευσι και Συριον; and still more so that, according to Lilius Gyraldus, cited by the same writer, the Persian deity should be denominated SURE; *Persæ* Συρη *Deum vocant*: for, in this title, we re-

* See Analysis, vol. ii. p. 121, where are the references to these respective authors.

cognize

cognize the very name of the solar divinity of India. If this should appear far-fetched, by reverting to that country where the worship of the SUN and PLANETS was first propagated by the impious Belus, we shall find in its antient name of Συρια, Syria, and in its modern appellation of Souria, sufficient intimation from what region and from what people the Indian name and adoration of the sun were probably derived. Earliest established in that country, the Sabian error diffused itself rapidly over all the East. The Mithratic worship in caverns, however, continued longest in Persia. The Persians thought it impious to erect temples to the deity; they continued, therefore, to perform this worship by night in the native and obscure cavern, and by day under the expanded canopy of heaven.

Cambyses, that remorseless despoiler of the Egyptian temples, is, by Mountfaucon, supposed to have been the occasion of renovating the Mithratic worship in Egypt about five hundred years before the æra of Christianity; for, though the Egyptians had doubtless worshipped the sun in caverns long before that period, yet the worship in subterraneous recesses had, for many centuries, been superseded by that in their august temples. That the rites of the Persian Mithra did, at that period, a

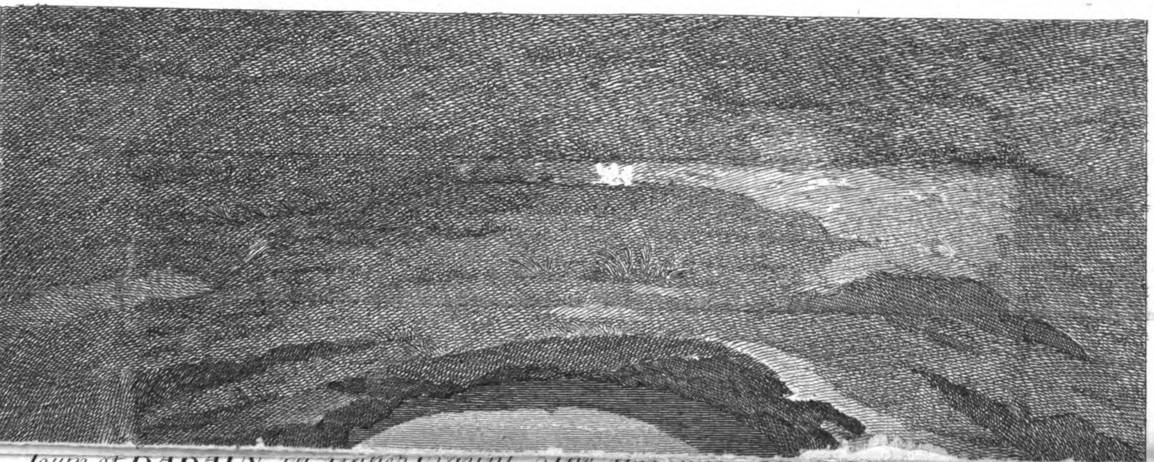
second

second time commence, and were blended with those of the Egyptian deities, is evident from a very curious engraving, with which he has favoured the public, of an actual SACRIFICE TO THE SUN, represented in an artificial cavern near the ruins of BABAIN, in Upper Egypt, I thought it so curious a monument of this once almost-universal idolatry, and, at the same time so immediately illustrative of my own assertions of its antient prevalence in India, that I have had it engraved, and shall present the reader with two descriptions of it, written at two different periods, a century distant from each other. The first, from Mountfaucon, is that of the Jesuit Du Bernat, who designed the whole upon the spot, and is as follows: "We passed the canal of Joseph, an antient aqueduct, and went to the village of Touna, near the ruins of the city Babain, which is in the midst of those of Abousir. We passed over these ruins and a long plain of sand, which brought us to a very singular monument, which my guide would have me see, and which *deserves* indeed to be seen. It is A SACRIFICE OFFERED TO THE SUN, and is sculptured in half-relief on a great rock. The hardness of the rock would have been able to defend this monument from the injuries of time, but not those of the

sword,

sword, which we find the Arabians have used to deface that part of the sacrifice which is wanting. I made a design of it as it then appeared. The stupendous cavern is hewn out of a vast rock in the middle of a mountain. It must have taken up a long time and prodigious labour to excavate this rock, between five and six feet deep, and for fifty feet high and fifty wide; for, in this so great superficies, all the figures relating to the sacrifice to the sun are comprehended. The sun appears encircled with a body of rays fifteen or twenty feet in diameter. Two priests of a natural stature, their heads covered, with long caps terminating in POINTS, stretch their hands towards the sun, adoring him. The ends of their fingers touch the ends of the solar rays. Two little boys, covered like the priests, stand by their sides, and reach them two great goblets full of liquor. Below the sun there are three lambs, killed and extended on piles, consisting of ten pieces of wood. Lower, by the piles, are seven jars, or *diotas*. On the other side of the sun, opposite to the sacrificers, there are two women and two girls in full relief, joined to the rock by part of their backs only and their feet. We see very plainly marks of the strokes by which their heads were destroyed. Behind the two

boys



Town of **BABAIN**, in upper Egypt. The rock has been [illegible]
to the height of fifty feet and is fifty feet in width and six in depth.
The female statues on the left, have been mutilated by the barbarian **ARABIANS**,

from Mountfaucon.

boys there is a kind of square, charged with several hieroglyphics, but some larger than others are placed up and down in the image."* So far M. Bernat in the Antiquities of Mountfaucon. The other account is that of M. Savary, who visited this curious monument in 1777.

Through each of the descriptions a strong feature of similarity reigns, and it must give pleasure to the reader to find that, in the space of nearly a century, no fresh injury has been done,,through the prejudice and superstition of the tyrants under whose dominion Egypt groans, to so beautiful a fragment of mythologic antiquity.

"A league to the south, (says M. Savary,) are the ruins of an antient city, which enrich the small town of Babain. Some distance beyond is a curious monument, a rock smoothed by the chissel, in the body of which a grotto has been cut fifty feet in diameter and six deep; the bottom represents *a sacrifice to the sun*, which is sculptured in demi-relief; on the right hand, two priests, *with pointed caps*, raise their arms towards that orb, and touch the end of its rays with their fingers; behind

* See Mountfaucon, L'Antiquité expliquée, in the Supplement on the gods of Egypt, tom. ii. book 7, and plate 50.

them, two children, with similar caps, hold vases for the libation. Three wood piles, sustained by seven vases with handles, and placed under the sun, bear slain lambs. On the left are two young maidens, who are only attached to the stone by the feet and back: the Arabs have broken off the heads and disfigured them with their lances. Various hieroglyphics around give, no doubt, the history of this sacrifice, which I believe is meant to Jupiter Ammon, a symbolical deity, by which the antient Egyptians denoted the Sun's entrance into the sign of the *Ram*. This animal was consecrated to Jupiter, and they then celebrated the commencement of the astronomical year and the renewal of light. The monument thus described, cut in hard stone, cannot but endure to the latest posterity.*

Of this most valuable and elaborate remain of antiquity, so directly elucidatory of the Mithratic worship of the Persians, and which, perhaps, has not, for its singular curiosity, its rival in the world, Mr Mazell, my engraver, has taken uncommon pains to furnish the reader with an exact copy: and Mountfaucon himself having farther obliged his readers with various judicious observations and conjec-

* Savary's Letters on Egypt, vol. i. p. 448.

tures

tures concerning the several objects pourtrayed upon it, I shall state them, as a guide to the judgement of the reader, while he surveys with wonder a work thus exquisitely wrought with so rude an instrument as the chissel.

The Persians, our author remarks, had two ways of representing the SUN in sculpture and painting; the one, under the form of a young man, whom they denominated MITHRAS; and the other in the similitude of a HUMAN FACE RADIATED. The latter is exhibited in the annexed plate; and, in the second part of this volume, my subscribers will be presented with a very correct engraving, copied from a rock, of the Persian Mithras, WINGED, with other astronomical symbols. By the three piles on which the lambs are extended for sacrifice, he is of opinion, are symbolized the THREE SEASONS; for, antiently, they reckoned only three. By the seven vases are denoted the SEVEN DAYS of the week, or else the seven planets; and, in corroboration of this last conjecture, he refers to an image of Mithras engraved in another part of his Antiquities, near which are seven altars flaming to the honour of that deity. The representation of TIME and its various parts, by symbolical figures, was a very common and a very natural practice with those antient mytholo-

 gists

gists who adored the SUN, whose revolutions are the fountain and guide of all the divisions of time, as the supreme God! The TIARÆ on the heads of the priests, he observes, very much resemble those of the Persians going in procession in the bass-reliefs found at CHELMINAR, near the antient Persepolis, to be seen in his second volume. The surrounding hieroglyphics, however, are evidently of Egyptian origin; since the HAWK, which appears on one side, and the IBIS, on the other, were birds holden in the highest veneration among the antient Egyptians. Their being sculptured, together with the symbols of the Persian superstition, in this image, are irrefragable proofs of his antecedent assertion, that, at the period of its excavation, the Egyptian and Persian devotion had begun to assimilate.*

Caves, and other similar subterranean recesses, consecrated to the worship of the Sun, were very generally, if not universally, in request among nations where that superstition was practised; and some of these caverns were full as curious in their construction, though possibly not so magnificent, as those

* Consult the whole of Mountfaucon's ingenious remarks in the page of his Supplement cited before.

of

of Media, Persia, and India. Various engravings of Mithratic caves in Media and Persia are to be met with in the travels of Le Bruyn and Sir John Chardin in the former of those countries. The mountains of Chusistan, in particular, at this day abound with stupendous excavations of this sort. From the higher Asia the veneration for sacred caverns gradually diffused itself over Asia Minor. The lofty steeps of Parnassus, sacred to the Muses, were covered with caverns. The Sybil made her dark responses amidst the gloom of a cavern; and it was from the hallowed rock of Delphi that the priestess of Apollo, (the solar deity of Greece,) inspired with a holy fury, uttered those oracles, that were so widely celebrated in the antient world. In the course of its progress from the East, this species of devotion so far infected even the Roman people, in the early periods of their empire, that they celebrated feasts in honour of Mithra, and dedicated an altar to that deity, with this inscription, *Deo invicto soli Mithræ*. The reigning idolatry was vigorously attacked by those celebrated fathers of the church, the eloquent Tertullian and the more violent Jerome; the former of whom ridicules the votaries of that superstition under the term of

 knights,

*knights, or soldiers, of Mithra,** while the latter brands the place of their worship with the title of the *Den of Mithra.*† The antient prevalence, indeed, of the solar worship in Rome is evident from the sacred reverence that prevailed for the *vestal fire*, which was kindled by the rays of the sun, and which the virgin priestesses, who attended it, kept continually burning in consecrated vases. In such profound veneration was this *hallowed flame* holden, that the accidental extinction of it was supposed to be the fatal presage of the most dreadful calamities to the empire. Virgil represents Æneas, the vaunted progenitor of the Romans, as zealously preserving this sacred fire amidst the surrounding conflagration of Troy;

> ————————Vestamque potentem,
> Æternumque *adytis* effert *penetralibus* ignem.
>
> Virg. Æneid. ii. 297.

The worship of Mithra, which still continued to be practised by some devotees, was finally proscribed at Rome, by order of Gracchus, præfect of the prætorium, in the fourth century.

* Mithra signat in frontibus milites suos, lib. i. cap. 1, de Baptismo.

† Mithræ Spelæum, epist. ad Lætam, cap. li.

Allusive

Allusive to this kind of cavern-temple and this species of devotion, there is a remarkable passage in Ezekiel, * where the inspired prophet in a vision beholds, and in the most sublime language stigmatizes, the horrible idolatrous abominations, which the Israelites had borrowed from their Asiatic neighbours of Chaldæa, Egypt, and Persia. *And he brought me*, says the prophet, *to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold* A HOLE IN THE WALL. *Then said he unto me, son of man, dig now in the wall; and, when I had digged in the wall, behold a* DOOR. *And he said unto me, go in*, (that is into this CAVERN-TEMPLE,) *and behold the wicked abominations that they do there. So I went in, and saw; and behold, every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and* ALL THE IDOLS *of the house of Israel, were* POURTRAYED UPON THE WALL ROUND ABOUT. In this subterraneous temple were *seventy men of the antients of the house of Israel*, and their employment was of a nature very nearly similar to that of the priests in Salsette; THEY STOOD WITH EVERY MAN HIS CENSER IN HIS HAND, AND A THICK CLOUD OF INCENSE WENT UP. *Then said he unto me, son of man, hast thou seen what the antients of the house of Israel do* IN THE DARK, *every*

* Ezek. viii. 6. et seq.

man in the CHAMBERS OF HIS IMAGERY? In Egypt, to the particular idolatory of which country, it is plain, from his mentioning *every form of creeping things and abominable beasts,* the prophet in this place alludes, these dark secluded recesses were called MYSTIC CELLS, and in them were celebrated the secret mysteries of Isis and Osiris, represented by the quadrupeds sacred to those deities, who, after all, as has been repeatedly asserted in this Dissertation, are only personifications of the SUN and MOON. Those, who are still inclined to contend for the superior antiquity of Egypt above all nations of the earth, will, from this circumstance, probably join with Warburton in insisting that the MITHRATIC RITES themselves were established in imitation of those of Isis and Osiris. But since by Osiris was symbolized the SOLAR SPHERE, and, by his affectionate consort Isis, the LUNAR ORB, illumined by his ray, or, as some mythologists explain it, the TERRESTRIAL GLOBE made fruitful by his generative warmth, we must look for the origin of this splendid devotion to that primæval country where the host of heaven and the elements of nature were first venerated, and whence the Sabian superstition darted throughout the world that beam of transcendant, but delusive, brightness which dazzled the eyes of the infatuated human race, and

and induced them to mistake and adore the grand receptacle of light for the Source of Light himself! Before this work shall be concluded, the ample retrospect, which my subject will compel me to take of the Chaldaic theology and sciences, will have a direct tendency to establish the truth of the hypothesis, which makes Chaldæa the original source of the Sabian error, and the central region in which it most vigorously flourished. For, upon what other hypothesis shall we account for the universal and immemorial prevalence of this superstition in every region of the earth? how shall we explain so singular a phænomenon as that the pyramidal temple, symbolical of the solar ray, should rise with almost as bold an elevation in Mexico as in Egypt? and that the Peruvians should adore the sun with as much ardour as antiently did the Magi of Persia and the Brahmins of India?

SECTION

SECTION V.

The Doctrines of the Brahmins and early Greeks compared in a more particular Investigation of the mysterious theological Rites, antiently celebrated in the Caverns of Salsette end Elephanta; proving, from the Similarity of their Construction, in Respect to the greater and less Divisions, and the long winding gloomy Recesses, equally belonging to those Caverns, the mystic Cell of Egypt, and the Temple of Eleusis in Greece, that the MYSTERIES *so celebrated over all the antient World, but particularly in Greece, were first performed in India, because the older Empire.—The Metempsychosis, the leading Doctrine in all the antient Mysteries, branched out into two distinct Kinds: the moral Metempsychosis and the sidereal Metempsychosis.—Both Kinds extensively examined.*

THE GENIUS OF ANTIQUITY delighted in MYSTERY. Dark and secret as were the subterraneous vaults and woody recesses, in

in which the sages of the East took up their residence, were the doctrines there promulgated. Their theology was veiled in allegory and hieroglyphics; their philosophy was involved in a circle of symbols. All the sublime wisdom of Asia, however, was concentrated and displayed in the CAVE OF MITHRA, which, we have observed from Porphyry, represented THE WORLD, and contained expressive emblems of the various elements of nature.

I have offered very forcible arguments to prove, that the excavations of Salsette and Elephanta were no other than stupendous temples, in which the rites of that deity, though probably under a different appellation, were performed. As corroborative evidence of my assertions in that respect, I have given, in a preceding section, the description of two august temples to the sun, the one of astonishing splendour, in Guzzurat, which was visited by Apollonius Tyanæus, in his voyage to India, at so remote a period as eighteen hundred years ago, and the other affirmed, in the Ayeen Akbery, to have been erected by an antient rajah, and not less remarkable for its magnitude and beautiful sculptures than the former for its splendour. But, since the caverns of India are undoubtedly of a date far superior to the

age

age of the second Zoroaster, or Zaratusht, who flourished in the reign of Darius Hystaspes, and who, according to Porphyry, "*First of all, in the mountains adjacent to Persia, consecrated a natural cave in honour of Mithra, the father of the universe*:"* and, since Zoroaster consecrated that cavern, *after his visit* to the Brahmins of India, and when he had already been instructed in the profound arcana of that astronomical science, for which they were so distinguished in antiquity; there arises, from this collective evidence, proof little less than demonstrative, that certain mysterious rites and ceremonies, congenial with their astronomical and theological speculations, *were* instituted and celebrated in these caverns at a period prior to those celebrated in any of the neighbouring regions. Although the circumstances above stated are highly in favour of such an hypothesis, yet it might appear presumptuous in me to assert, that these mysterious celebrations were the real origin of ALL THOSE MYSTIC RITES, which, in succeeding ages, throughout Asia as well as Europe, in Persia, in Greece, and in Rome, passed under the various denominations of Mithraic, Orphic, Eleusinian, and Bacchic, and the more so, be-

* Porphyrius De Antro Nympharum, p. 254.

cause

cause a very profound critic in antient Egyptian literature* has asserted, as an incontrovertible fact, that the most early mysteries instituted in the world were those of Egypt in honour of Isis and Osiris. When, however, we consider the high and acknowledged antiquity of the GEETA, and other Sanscreet productions, in which those mysteries are evidently glanced at; when we attend to the form in which the caverns themselves are excavated, and compare them with what we read, in antient authors, of the form of the Egyptian and Grecian temples, supernal or subterranean; above all, when we consider the hieroglyphic sculptures and astronomical symbols, with which both the Egyptian and Indian temples were adorned; we possibly shall not be over-hasty in acceding to the positive assertion of that learned but dogmatical writer. Indeed, an hypothesis directly subversive of Warburton's may, with every appearance of reason, be maintained; and, before this volume shall be concluded, very convincing testimony may result from this investigation, that the mysteries of both Osiris and Mithra are only copies of the antient worship of Surya, the SOLAR FIRE, which originally was adored in

* See Warburton's Divine Legation, vol. i. p. 133.

Chaldæa,

Chaldæa, or Syria, as the noblest object in nature, and as the purest symbol of Deity in the whole extent of creation.

The subject itself alludes to periods too remote not to be involved in the deepest obscurity. It is principally by analogy that our researches must be guided and our decision regulated. I proceed, therefore, to shew, that, in these caverns, apartments were constructed exactly similar, and symbols were elevated uniformly correspondent, with those which were antiently provided, in the mystic cells of Egypt, for the celebration of the rites of Isis, and in the gloomy subterraneous recesses sacred in Greece to Ceres, the great mother of all things, or the vivific principle in nature personified. Plutarch,* who travelled into Egypt for the purpose of obtaining information upon the subject, and who has largely investigated, and in great part explained, the doctrines inculcated by the priests of that country, concerning Isis and Osiris, in regard to the *form* of their temples in which these mysteries were performed, expressly describes them, as, in one place, *ανειμενων εις πτερα και δρομους υπαθριους και καθαρους*, extending into long wings and fair and open avenues;

* Plutarch. de Iside et Osiride, p. 639. Steph. edit.

and,

and, in another, κρυπτα και σκοτια κατα γης εχοντων ςολιστηρια Θηϐαιοις εοικοτα και σηκοις, as having secret and gloomy subterraneous vestries, resembling the adyta of the Thebans. Exactly thus arranged were the Indian caverns. Mr Hunter informs us, "that, on entering Elephanta, you are led, first of all, into a verandah, or colonnade, which extends from east to west sixty feet; that its breadth from north to south is sixteen feet; and that the body of the cave is on every side surrounded by similar verandahs;"* and, in respect to its dark recesses, Niebuhr observes: "Près de D, (sur le plan,† tab. 3,) il y a des appartemens obscurs, où, dans la saison que j'ai été voir ce temple, il y avoit encore de l'eau, qui vient fort à point aux vaches qui se rendent ici. Près d'E, il y a un grand appartement pareillement obscur." With respect to the symbols that adorned the mystic cell of Egypt, they are all supposed to be accurately arranged in that celebrated monument of antiquity, called the ISIAC or BEMBINE TABLE, which exhibits at one view, under various bestial and human figures, the deities adored in Egypt, but which, as has been conjectured

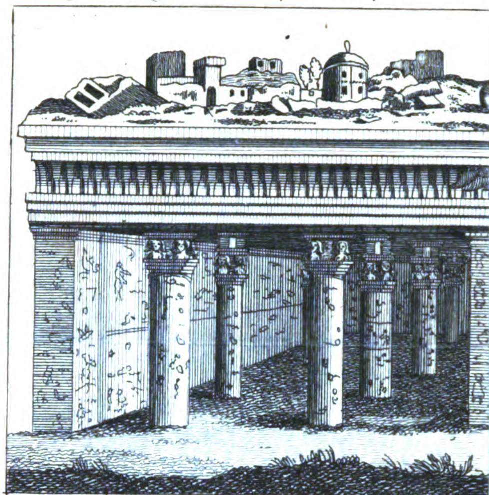
* Archæologia, vol. vii. p. 287.

* Voy. en Arab. tom. ii. p. 28, where see that plan.

by

by those learned antiquarians, who have written concerning its age and design in a more particular manner, alludes to the mystic rites of Isis and Osiris. Of this curious and valuable remain, a short account from Pignorius, whose edition of it is in my possession, may not be unacceptable to my readers. It was a table of brass, four feet in length, and nearly of the same diameter; the groundwork of the plate consisted of a black enamel, with silver plates curiously inlaid, on which were engraved a variety of emblems, divided into different classes and compartments, with hieroglyphic characters intermixed; the centre contained the human figures, or rather gods in human shape, some standing, some in motion, some sitting on thrones, to whom other human figures are making offerings or performing sacrifices. Two of these figures, distinguished by the sacred ibis and the hawk's head, are evidently intended for Isis and Osiris; but even, without that distinction, the conspicuous figure, which the sacred *bull*, the known symbol of Osiris, makes on this table sufficiently points out the deities, in illustration of *whose rites* it was designed. The border that surrounds the whole is crowded with figures of birds, beasts, and fishes, agreeing very nearly, both in number and shape, with

The Vestibule of a most superb temple at DE

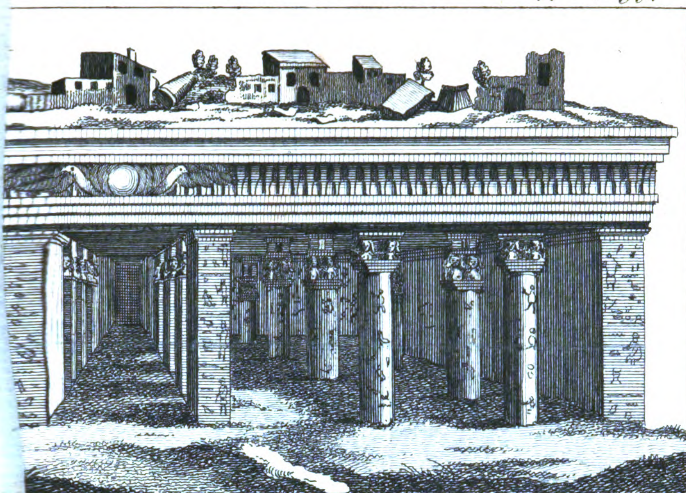


The massy columns forty feet high half h
sculptures. On the extensive summit of the te

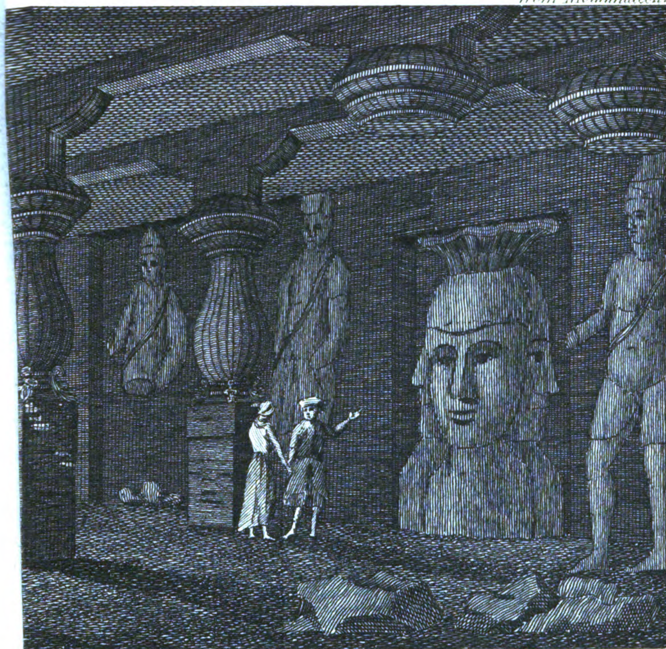


A perspective view of the ins
ELEPHANTA, and of the mo
which decorat

VDARA, *the ancient* **TENTARA**, *in Upper Egypt.*



uried in the sands and charged with hieroglyphic
nple the **ARABIANS** *have erected a confiderable Town.*
from Mountfaucon.



ide of the grand cavern—pagoda of
e conspicuous mythologic **SCULPTURES**
the walls of that pagoda.

with the various animals asserted by the antients to have received divine homage in the different cities of Egypt. Before most of these are human figures, delineated in postures of profound adoration. This valuable relic of antient art, on the plunder of Rome by the army of Charles the Fifth, about the year 1527, became the property of a common artificer,* and was sold by him to Cardinal Bembo, by whose name it has since been frequently distinguished. At the death of that cardinal, the TABLE OF ISIS came into the possession of the Duke of Mantua, in whose family it was preserved as an inestimable rarity, till the palace of Mantua was plundered of its immense treasure of curiosities by the imperial general in 1630, since which period the original has not been heard of; though, owing to the zeal of those profound antiquaries, Pignorius and Mountfaucon, the literary world is in the possession of two exact copies of it, with some curious strictures by each of those writers. The figures of the gods, or deified mortals, in the middle of this table, might possibly be intended for a representation of those sculptures that adorned

* Vide Pignorii MENSÆ ISICÆ Expositio, p. 12. Edit. Amst. 1669.

the body of the mystic temple, in the same manner as the Indian deities, or god-rajahs, are arranged along the centre part of the walls of Elephanta; while the animals peculiar to Egypt, pourtrayed on the surrounding border, might, like those peculiar to India on the cornices of the same temple-pagoda, be symbols of the various constellations, and the kneeling figures emblematical of the worship paid to them.

After considering the form and some of the decorations, let us attend to the mysterious rites celebrated, and the doctrines themselves propagated, in these sacred recesses. I offer it, with diffidence, as my humble opinion, that the grand basis of all the theological dogmas inculcated, at least in those of India, was the Μετεμψυχωσις, or transmigration of the human soul, and I am so fortunate as to be able to support that opinion by the express declaration of Porphyry, that the Metempsychosis was one of the first doctrines taught εν τοις τȣ Μιθρȣ μυϛηριοις, in the mystic rites of Mithra, which is only the Asiatic appellation of the African Osiris. Now, the Metempsychosis was a doctrine, invented, by the philosophers of the antient world, for the direct purpose of vindicating the mysterious ways of Providence and removing all im-

pious doubts concerning the moral attributes of the Deity; which, if permitted to take root, they knew must have been attended with the most baneful effects in society. But the doctrine of the existence of the human soul in a *prior* state naturally induced the supposition of its existence in a *future* sphere of action; and, while those diligent observers of mankind beheld the unequal distribution of human happiness and misery, while they beheld VIRTUE frequently groaning under the bondage of oppression, and VILLAINY as frequently clothed in regal purple, they were not only confirmed themselves in that judgement, but endeavoured to impress the awful truth upon the minds of others. If this argument should not hold good in regard to *all* the philosophers of Greece and Rome, as in the case of certain bold sceptics and presumptuous sophists among them, the little knowledge I have acquired of the theologic sentiments, of the inflexible virtue, and severe penances, of the Hindoo philosophers, has convinced me, that to *them* it is perfectly applicable. The professed design, then, both of the Indian, the Egyptian, and Eleusinian, mysteries, was to restore the fallen soul to its pristine state of purity and perfection; and the INITIATED in those mysteries were instructed in the sublime

doctrines of a supreme presiding Providence, of the immortality of the soul, and of the rewards and punishments of a future state. But the Brahmins, in their profounder speculations on the being and attributes of God, initiated their pupils into mysteries still more refined: they inculcated upon their minds the necessity, resulting as a natural consequence from that doctrine, of not only restraining the violence of the more boisterous passions, but of entirely subduing the gross animal propensities by continued acts of abstinence and mortification, and of seeking that intimate communion of soul with the great Father of the universe, which, when at its most elevated point of holy transport, is in India denominated *the absorbed state.* In India, I say, for this ενθυσιασμος of the soul, those mortifications of the body, and that subjugation of the passions, ever have been, and are at this day, carried to such a height of extravagance as is absolutely inconceivable by those who have not been spectators of it, and is such as far exceeds the most boasted austerities of Romish penitents. I shall, in a succeeding chapter, lay before the reader some circumstances of voluntary penance undergone by the YOGEES, or devotees of India, that cannot fail to excite equal horror and astonishment

nishment in his mind. For the present I shall content myself with giving a few passages, that relate to the Indian doctrine of the Metempsychosis and the Unity of God, from the three Sanscreet publications, so often alluded to in the course of this Dissertation, since those publications are doubtless the most authentic source of all possible information upon Indian Antiquities, and since one of them, the GEETA, was unquestionably written in the very earliest ages of the world, and, at all events, many centuries before the ages of Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato.

In that sublime Episode, which, Mr Wilkins informs us, the Brahmins consider as the repository "of all the grand mysteries of their religion,"* the doctrine of the Metempsychosis was probably first promulgated to mankind in the following passages. "As *the soul*, in this mortal frame, findeth *infancy*, *youth*, and *old age*, so, in some future frame, will it find the like." Bhagvat-Geeta, page 36. "As a man throweth away old garments and putteth on new, even so the soul, having quitted its old mortal frames, entereth into others which are new." "Death is cer-

* Preface to the Geeta, p. 23.

tain to all things which are subject to birth, and regeneration to all things which are mortal." "The former state of beings is unknown, the middle state is evident, but their future state is not to be discovered." Ibid. page 37. In these passages, the doctrine of the transmigration itself is clearly established; let us consider it in the ascending scale, as holding out a reward for virtuous actions.

A man, whose devotions have been broken off by death, having enjoyed, for an immensity of years, the rewards of his virtues in the regions above, at length is born again in some respectable family, or, perhaps, in the house of some learned YOGEE." Ibid. p. 67. This species of devotees, whose prescribed routine of penance and prayer has not been fully completed, seems alluded to in another part of the Geeta, under the character of those "who obtain the regions of Eendra, the prince of celestial beings, in which (inferior) heaven (as in Mahomed's paradise) they feast upon celestial food and divine enjoyments; and, when they have partaken of that spacious heaven for awhile, in proportion to their virtues, they sink again into this mortal life." P. 80. "Wise men, who have abandoned all thought of the fruit which is produced from their actions, (that is, who

are

are actuated by a total indifference in regard to terrestial concerns, and are absorbed in contemplation of the Deity,) are freed from the chains of birth and go to the regions of eternal happiness," P. 40. The YOGEE, or devotee, who, labouring with all his might, is purified of his offences, and, AFTER MANY BIRTHS, MADE PERFECT, at length goes to the *supreme abode*." Ibid. p. 67. "Know, O Arjun, that all the regions, between this and the *abode of Brahm*, afford but a transient residence; but he, who findeth me, returneth not again to mortal birth." P. 75. Let us now consider the doctrine of the Metempsychosis in the descending scale, or as a punishment of vicious actions. "There are two kinds of destiny prevailing in the world; the divine destiny is for MOKSH, or eternal absorption in the divine nature, and the evil destiny confineth the soul to mortal birth. Those, who are born under the influence of the evil destiny, know not what it is to proceed in virtue or recede in vice; they say the world is without beginning, without end, and without an Eeswar; (supreme God;) that all things are conceived by the junction of the sexes, and that LOVE is the only cause." The principles of the SEEVA BUKHT seem here to be censured by Kreeshna, who, we have often

 before

before observed, is the incarnate representative of the very deity, VESHNU, by whose name the other great sect of Hindostan is distinguished. "These LOST SOULS and men of little understandings, having fixed upon this vision, are born of dreadful and inhuman deeds, for the destruction of mankind; they trust to their carnal appetites, (most probably the true source of the devotion paid to the *Lingam*,) which are hard to be satisfied, are hypocrites, and overwhelmed with madness and intoxication. Because, of their folly, they adopt false doctrines and continue to live the LIFE OF IMPURITY; therefore, I cast down upon the earth those furious abject wretches, those evil beings, who thus despise me, into the wombs of EVIL SPIRITS and UNCLEAN BEASTS. Being doomed to the wombs of ASOORS (fallen rebellious spirits) *from birth to birth*, at length, not finding me, they go into the most infernal regions." Geeta, p. 115, 116, 117. In the infernal regions, however, they are not doomed to languish in misery for ever, since the Hindoo system of theology allows not of the doctrine of *eternal torments*; but, after a certain period, the delinquents are called forth again to begin anew the probationary journey of souls, and are all to be finally happy.

There

There is a very curious, though somewhat obscure, passage, in the eighth division of this most antient collection of divine precepts, that strongly corroborates the opinion, which I ventured to offer in a preceding page, that the seven BOOBUNS, or spheres of purification, through which, according to Mr Halhed, the transmigrating soul is doomed to pass, had a direct allusion to the seven planets; it is as follows. "Those holy men, who are acquainted with Brahm, departing this life in the fiery light of day, in the *bright season of the moon*, within the six months of the sun's northern course, go unto him; but those who depart in the gloomy night of the *moon's dark season*, and while the sun is yet within the southern part of his journey, ascend for a while into the regions of the moon and again return into *mortal birth*." Ibid. p. 76.

To this prevailing doctrine of the Metempsychosis, a doctrine indisputably propagated in the schools of India long before it was promulged in those of the Egyptian and Grecian philosophers, a variety of expressions, occurring in a drama, exhibited, according to an author by no means favourable to the high chronological claims of the Brahmins, at the court of an Indian monarch, above 2000 years ago,*

ago,* and representative of men and manners who flourished a thousand years before even that period, decidedly point. " In thy *passage over this earth,* where the paths are now high, now low, and the true path seldom distinguished, the traces of thy feet must needs be unequal; but virtue will press thee right onward." Sacontala, p. 49. " Perhaps," says the king Dushmanta, " the sadness of men, otherwise happy, on seeing beautiful forms and listening to sweet melody, arises from some faint remembrance of past joys and the traces of connections *in a former state of existence.*" Ibid, p. 55. In the following passage we not only find this doctrine glanced at, but the strange sentiments entertained by the Hindoos, relative to the earth and its seven deeps, as described in the geographical treatise, authentically displayed. Of the infant son of Dushmanta, the divine Casyapa thus prophetically speaks; " Know, Dushmanta, that his heroic virtue will raise him to a dominion extended from sea to sea; before he has passed *the ocean of mortal life,* he shall rule, unequalled in combat, *this earth with seven peninsulas.*" P. 97. As, in the extract from the Geeta, the

* See the Preface to Sacontala, p. 9.

reader

reader has been made acquainted that the god Eendra has an inferior heaven, or paradise, which is appointed for the residence of those souls whose penance has not been fully completed; so, in the Sacontala, we read of "the superior heaven and central place of Veeshnu," p. 42, which proves their belief in a succession of celestial mansions. The following passage, describing the occupations of the Brahmin candidate for perfection, is so highly illustrative of what has been before remarked, concerning the sacred baths of purification and consecrated groves and caverns, that I cannot avoid transcribing it; "It becomes pure spirits to feed on balmy air in a *forest* blooming with trees of life, to bathe in rills dyed yellow with the golden dust of the lotos, and to fortify their virtue in the mysterious *bath*; to meditate, in *caves*, the pebbles of which are unblemished gems, and to restrain their passions, even though nymphs of exquisite beauty smiled around them; in this forest alone is attained the summit of true piety, to which other hermits in vain aspire." Geeta, p. 88.

It is remarkable, that this holy grove, the retreat of Brahmin hermits, is described as being situate in the mountains of HEEMAKOT, which is the Sanscreet name of IMAUS, that is,

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in that very range of mountains of which Naugracut forms a part, and in which I have already asserted the Brahmin religion once flourished in its greatest vigour. "That mountain," says Matali, the charioteer of Eendra, "is the mountain of Gandharvas, named Heemakot; the universe contains not a more excellent place for the successful devotion of the pious." P. 87. In the same page, there follows a description of a devotee in the act of penance, which is in the highest degree interesting and affecting, and will hereafter be cited by me as a proof to what an extreme point of severity they carried those penitentiary tortures, which they voluntarily inflict on themselves, to obtain absorption in BRAHME, or, in other words, eternal happiness.

The last passage which I shall extract from the Sacontala, relative to the journey of the migrating soul, forms the concluding sentence of that beautiful drama, and is more decisive than any yet adduced: "May Seeva, with an azure neck and red locks, eternally potent and self-existing, avert from me the pain of another birth in this perishing world, *the seat of crimes and of punishment.*" Ibid. p. 98.

That antient and celebrated composition of VEESHNU SARMA, the Heetopades, is not less express upon the subject of the Metempsychosis.

"It

" It is said, fate is nothing but the deeds committed in *a former state of existence*; wherefore it behoveth a man vigilantly to exert the powers he is possessed of," Heetopades, p. 6. This passage seems to furnish us with an explanation of the word destiny, in a preceding extract from the Geeta; for, if that word be understood in a literal sense, all human exertions must be of little avail. Mr Wilkins explains the passage in this manner in a short note, in which he says: " It is necessary to inform the reader, that many of the Hindoos believe this to be a place of rewards and punishments as well as of probation. Thus, good and bad fortune are the fruits of good and evil deeds committed in a former life; therefore, to prevent the latter in a future life, the author asserts, " It behoveth a man," &c. Ibid. p. 296. " What else, my friend, can this misfortune be, but the effect of the evil committed in a *prior state of existence*? Sickness, sorrow, and distress, bonds and punishment, to corporeal beings, *are fruits of the tree of their own transgressions*." P. 25. " In this world, *raised up for our purification. and to prevent our wandering in the regions below*, the resolution to sacrifice one's own life to the safety of another is attained by the practice of virtue." Ibid. p. 229. " The dissolution of a body foretelleth *a new birth*;

birth; thus, the coming of death, which is not to be passed over, *is as the entrance into life.*" Ibid. p. 270.

Finally, let it be observed, that Mr Wilkins explains the term Salvation as "a union with the universal Spirit of God and *final exemption from mortal birth.*" Heetopades, p. 299.

After having produced these passages relative to the transmigration of the soul through the various animal mansions, let us consider the Metempsychosis in a still more exalted point of view; let us trace the progress of the soul up the grand sidereal LADDER of seven GATES, and through the revolving spheres, which, it has been observed, are called in India the BOOBUNS of purification. That the Hindoos actually entertained notions on this subject entirely consentaneous with those propagated by the institutor of the Mithratic mysteries is evident from the concise, but obscure, passage just cited in page 233. If, however, in my humble attempt farther to illustrate this antient dogma of the Indian school, I should not be able to produce so many extracts as directly elucidatory of this as of the former subject from the GEETA, I am in hopes the very curious and interesting intelligence, which I am now about to lay before the reader,

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and which merits his most attentive consideration, will, in a great measure, make amends for that defect. We must, therefore, once more revert to the hallowed cavern of the Persian deity, and to the page of Porphyry, who is the best expositor of the Mithratic theology. Porphyry himself was one of the profoundest critics and scholars that the schools of Greece ever bred, and deeply initiated in all the mystic rites of the antient recondite philosophy and abstruse metaphysics. He acquaints us, that, "according to Eubulus, Zoroaster, first of all, among *the neighbouring mountains of Persia*, consecrated a natural cell, adorned with flowers* and watered with fountains, in honour of MITHRA, the father of the universe. For, he thought a cavern an emblem of the world, fabricated by MITHRA; and in this cave were many geographical symbols, arranged in the most perfect symmetry and placed at certain distances, which shadowed out the elements and climates of the world."† Porphyry, in the preceding part of this beautiful treatise, had informed his readers

* Ανθηρον, *floridum:* I know not how otherwise to translate the word, and yet it appears singular enough that a dark and barren cave should be adorned with flowers.

† Vide Porphyrius de Antro Nympharum, p. 256, edit. Cantab. octavo, 1655.

that

that the antients considered the world as justly typified by a cavern, alluding both to the earthy and stony particles of which it is composed as well as its obscurity and concave form ; and that the Persians, intending mystically to represent the descent of the soul into an inferior nature and its subsequent ascent into the intellectual world, initiated the priest, or candidate in the Mithratic rites, in caverns, or places so fabricated as to resemble them. After the example of Zoroaster, he adds, it was the custom of other nations in succeeding ages to perform initiatory rites in dens and caverns, natural and artificial; for, as they consecrated temples, groves, and altars, to the celestial gods, but, to the terrestial gods and heroes, altars alone ; and, to the subterraneous deities, vaults and cells; so to the WORLD they dedicated ἀντρα και σπηλαια, caves and dens. Hence, he intimates, the Pythagoreans and the Platonists took occasion to call this world *the dark cavern of the imprisoned soul.* Plato, in the seventh book of his republic, in which he treats of the condition of man in the natural world, expressly says: "Behold men, as if dwelling in a subterranean cavern:" and he compares this terrene habitation to the gloomy residence of a prison, through which the solar light, imitated by the fires that glow in the recesses of the cavern, shines with a bright

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and vivifying ray. The Homeric cave of the nymphs, which is the particular subject of his essay, was sacred to the NAIADS, because they presided over fountains; those fountains, which, ever bubbling up in the caverns, were only the mystic emblem of the intellectual waters which sweeten and purify the soul contaminated with guilt. The fountains were also doubtless typical of the watery element, as was the fire of the great IGNEOUS PRINCIPLE, that subtle, active, ethereal, and resistless, spirit, which, diffused throughout the universe, embraces and animates its whole extent. The humid exhalations, which arise from the confluent waters, are an emblem of the fourth element, the air; while their bland and genial vapours serve as nourishment to the ethereal beings who hover round, the guardian genii of the solemn retreat. To describe the marble urns and consecrated vases for the reception of the purifying honey, an article still of great request in the libations and other theological rites of India, and the vestments of purple woven by the nymphs, all mystical emblems used in the rites of initiation, and explained by Porphyry, would be of less immediate utility than to consider the astronomical symbols, of which, as I have cursorily stated from another of their most celebrated philosophers,

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they were by no means destitute in the representation of the stages of the Metempsychosis. From that author we learned, that they erected in these caverns a high ladder, which had SEVEN GATES, according to the number of the planets through which the soul gradually ascended to the supreme mansion of felicity. I must here observe, that the word GATE, which is a part of Asiatic palaces by far the most conspicuous and magnificent, and upon adorning of which immense sums are often expended, is an expression, that, throughout the East, is figuratively used for the mansion itself. Indeed, it seems to be thus denominated with singular propriety, since, as those of my readers who have resided in Asiatic regions well know, it is under those GATES that conversations are holden, that hospitality to the passing traveller is dispensed, and the most important transactions in commerce are frequently carried on. Captain Hamilton, giving an account of Fort St George, observes, "that the GATE of that town, called the sea-gate, being very spacious, was formerly the common exchange, where merchants of all nations resorted about eleven o'clock to treat of business or merchandise."* Astronomy, deriving its

* See Hamilton's Voyage, vol. i. p. 368.

birth

birth in Asia, and exploring nature and language for new symbols, soon seised upon this allegorical expression as highly descriptive of her romantic ideas, and the title was transferred from terrestrial houses to the spheres. Hence, in the Arabian astronomy, those constellations in the heavens, nearest which the moon, during her monthly revolutions, remains every night, are called the MANSIONS OF THE MOON,* which, according to the Arabian computation, amount in number to twenty-eight, according to the Indian, to only twenty-seven, mansions; and these gates must, therefore, be considered as houses, or spheres, through which the soul passes in her course to the centre of light and felicity. It may here be remarked, that the expression occurs frequently in holy writ, often in the former sense, and sometimes even in the astronomical allusion of the word. In the former acceptation we read, in Esther, ii. 19, of the *Jew Mordecai sitting in the king's* GATE: in La-

* These MANSIONS OF THE MOON are, from Mr Costard's Arabian astronomy, accurately marked on the celestial globe, made and sold by Mr George Adams, in Fleet-street, whose obliging kindness to the author during the composition of a work, in which astronomy and theology are so intimately connected, he thus publicly and gratefully acknowledges.

mentations, v. 14, *that the elders have ceased from the* GATE: and, in Ruth, iii. 11, it is used in a sense remarkably figurative; *all the* GATE (that is, house) *of my people know thou art virtuous.* In the second acceptation, the word as well as the attendant symbol itself, to our astonishment, occur in the account of Jacob's vision of the LADDER WHOSE TOP REACHED TO HEAVEN, and in the exclamation, THIS IS THE GATE OF HEAVEN. This circumstance cannot fail of exciting in the reader the utmost surprise, since it is hence manifested to have been an original patriarchal symbol, and will hereafter be brought by me in evidence that there was among the post-diluvian ancestors of the human race an astronomy older than has yet been *proved* to exist, and possibly tinctured with ante-diluvian philosophy. A similar idea occurs in Isaiah, xxxviii, 10; *I shall go to the* GATES *of the grave*; and in Matthew, xvi. 18; *the* GATES *of hell shall not prevail against it*; nor is it impossible but our blessed Lord himself might speak in allusion to the popular notion of the two astronomical GATES celestial and terrestrial, when, in Matthew, vii. 13, he said, *Enter ye in at the strait* GATE; *for, wide is the* GATE *and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which*

go

go in thereat; because strait is the GATE *and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

But let us return to the Homeric cave, concerning the fabrication, intention, and ornaments, of which Porphyry has given us a disquisition, which, however obscure it may appear from the very partial information on this subject which has descended to us from the antients, will more than sufficiently serve to convince us how deeply were blended together their profound astronomical and metaphysical speculations. This cave had two entrances, or GATES, as they are called even by Homer; the one of which looked to the SOUTH, the other to the NORTH.

> Perpetual waters through the grotto glide,
> A lofty GATE unfolds on either side;
> That, to the north, is pervious to mankind,
> The sacred south t'immortals is consign'd.

On this passage the great philosopher remarks, "There are two extremities in the heavens: viz. the winter solstice, than which no part of heaven is nearer to the south; and the summer solstice, which is situated next to the north. But the summer tropic, that is, the solstitial circle, is in Cancer, and the winter tropic in Capricorn. And, since Cancer

cer is the nearest to the earth, it is deservedly attributed to the moon, which is itself proximate to the earth. But, since the southern pole, from its great distance, is invisible to us, Capricorn is assigned to Saturn, who is the highest and most remote of all the planets. Again, the signs from Cancer to Capricorn are situated in the following order; the first is Leo, called, by astrologers, the House of the SUN; afterwards Virgo, or the House of Mercury; Libra, of Venus; Scorpio, of Mars; Sagittarius, of Jupiter; and Capricornus, or the House of Saturn. But, from Capricorn, in an inverse order, Sagittarius is attributed to Saturn, Pisces to Jupiter, Aries to Mars, Taurus to Venus, Gemini to Mercury, and, last of all, Cancer to the MOON. From among the number of these, theologists consider Cancer and Capricorn as two ports; Plato calls them two GATES. Of these, they affirm that Cancer is the gate through which *souls descend*, but Capricorn that through which they *ascend*, and exchange a material for a divine condition of being. Cancer is, indeed, northern, and adapted to descent; but Capricorn is southern, and accommodated to ascent: and, indeed, the GATES of the cave, which look to the north, are, with great propriety, said to be pervious to the descent of men; while the southern

southern GATES are not the avenues of the gods, but of souls ascending to the gods. On this account the poet does not say it is the passage of the gods, but of immortals, which appellation is also common to our souls, whether in their whole essence, or from some particular and most excellent part only they are denominated immortal. It is reported that Parmenides mentions these two PORTS in his book, concerning the nature of things; as likewise that they were not unknown to the Egyptians and Romans: for, the Romans celebrate their Saturnalia when the sun is in Capricorn; and, during this festivity, the servants wear the shoes of those that are free, and all things are distributed among them in common; the legislator intimating, by this ceremony, that those, who are servants at present by the condition of their birth, will be hereafter liberated by the Saturnalian feast, and by the house attributed to Saturn, *i. e.* Capricorn; when, reviving in that sign, and being divested of the material garments of generation, they shall return to their pristine felicity and to the fountain of life. But, since the path beginning from Capricorn is retrograde, and pertains to descent, hence the origin of the word Januarius, or January, from *janua*, a gate, which is the space of time

measured by the sun, while, returning from Capricorn towards the east, he directs his course to the northern parts. But, with the Egyptians, the beginning of the year is not Aquarius, as among the Romans, but Cancer: for, the star SOTHIS borders on Cancer, which star the Greeks denominate Κυνος, or the Dog. When this star rises, they celebrate the calends of the months, which begins their year; because this is the place of the heavens where generation commences, by which the world subsists. On this account the doors of the Homeric caverns are not dedicated to the east and the west, nor to the equinoctial signs, Aries and Libra, but to the north and south, and particularly to those ports, or celestial signs, which are the nearest of all to these quarters of the world: and this because the present cave is sacred to SOULS and to NYMPHS, the divinities of waters." *

A passage remarkably consonant to the preceding, and equally replete with astronomical allusions, occurs in Macrobius, a writer profoundly versed in all the mysteries of the Oriental world.

"Pythagoras (says that writer †) thought that the empire of Pluto began downwards

* Vide Porphyrius de Antro Nympharum, p. 265.

† Macrobius in Somnium Scipionis.

from

from the milky way, because souls falling thence appear already to have receded from the gods. Hence he asserts that the nutriment of milk is first offered to infants, because their first motion commences from the Galaxy, when they begin to fall into terrene bodies. On this account, since those who are about to descend are yet in Cancer, and have not left the Galaxy, they rank in the order of gods; but when, by falling, they arrive at the Lion, in this constellation they enter on the exordium of their future condition, because, in the Lion, the rudiments of birth and certain primary exercises of human nature commence. But Aquarius is opposite the Lion, and presently sets after the Lion rises; hence, when the sun is in Aquarius, funeral rites are performed to departed souls, because he is then carried in a sign which is contrary or adverse to human life." *

During the progress of this arduous undertaking, it has been my misfortune to have *toiled alone*, or only assisted by such Sanscreet publications as have yet seen the light under the sanction of Sir William Jones, Mr Halhed, and Mr Wilkins. Had the two latter gentlemen, who are the best Sanscreet scholars

* Macrobius in Somnium Scipionis, lib. i. cap. 12, p. 61, edit. oct. Variorum. Ludg. Bat. 1670.

now

now in Europe, deigned to honour my infant work with the same notice which it has experienced from the great Orientalist, who is unfolding to the Asiatic world the mild laws of this country, and dispensing justice, according to that noble system of jurisprudence, to the once-oppressed progeny of Hindostan, this production might possibly have come before the public less obscured with error and less unworthy of their applause. Upon the present curious and interesting topic, in particular, an occasional communication with these celebrated Indian scholars would, doubtless, have enabled me to throw new light, and in a higher degree to gratify excited curiosity. Happily, however, not deprived of the advantage of their productions, I proceed to glean such scattered fragments of information as appear to me elucidatory of the sidereal migration of the soul aspiring after the raptures of divine absorption in BRAHME, the supreme good. " The Indians (says Mr Halhed) have, in all ages, believed in the transmigration of souls, which they denominate KAYAPREWAESH and KAYAPELUT; this latter term literally answers to the word Metempsychosis. An antient Shaster, called the Geeta, written by Vyasa, has a beautiful stanza upon the system of the Transmigration, which he

he compares to a change of dress. Their creed, in this respect, is, that those souls, which have attained to a certain degree of purity, either by the innocence of their manners or the severity of their mortifications, are removed to regions of happiness proportioned to their respective merits; but that those, who cannot so far surmount the prevalence of bad example and the forcible degeneracy of the times as to deserve such a promotion, are condemned to undergo continual punishment in the animation of successive animal forms, until, at the stated period, another renovation of the FOUR YUGS, or grand periods, shall commence upon the dissolution of the present."

The preceding extracts have sufficiently evinced the truth of these observations by Mr Halhed. With respect to the sidereal migration, we are obliged with the following additional intelligence.

"They suppose that there are fourteen BHOOBUNS, or spheres, seven below and six above the earth. The seven inferior worlds are said to be altogether inhabited by an infinite variety of serpents. The earth itself is called BHOOR, and mankind who inhabit it BHOOR-LOGUE. The spheres, gradually ascending thence, are, 1. BOBUR, whose inhabitants are called BOBUR-LOGUE; 2. the SWER-

GEE-

GEH-LOGUE; 3. the MAHURR-LOGUE; 4. the JUNNEH-LOGUE; 5. the TEPPEH-LOGUE; 6. the SUTTEE-LOGUE." The term LOGUE, according to Mr Holwell, signifies literally a people, a multitude, a congregation; and DEWTAH-LOGUE the angelic host.*

The Bobur is the immediate vault of the visible heavens, in which the sun, moon, and stars, are placed. The Swergeh is the first paradise and general receptacle for those who merit a removal from the earth. The Mahurr-logue are the Fakers and such persons as, by dint of prayer, have acquired an exraordinary degree of sanctity. The Junneh-logue are also the souls of pious and moral men, and beyond this sphere they are not supposed to pass without some uncommon merits and qualifications. The sphere of Tuppeh is the reward of those who have all their lives performed some wonderful act of penance and mortification, or who have died martyrs for their religion. The Suttee, or highest sphere, is the residence of Brahma and his particular favourites, whence they are also called Brahma-logue. This is the place of destination for those men who have never uttered a falsehood during their whole lives,

* Holwell, vol. ii. p. 35.

and

and for those women who have voluntarily burned themselves with their husbands." *

To these fourteen spheres of reward and punishment, the Geeta, in various places, directly, but obscurely, alludes. In that episode, Arjun, just ready to stain his sword with the blood of his relatives assembled to oppose him in the field of battle, is checked by the reflections that the regions of Naraka, the abode of serpents, "are provided for those who murder their relations." This, however, is not the only bitter reflection to which his painful situation gives birth; the baneful consequences will extend to others, since the dead themselves are affected by the crimes of the living. The forefathers of their slain brethren, "being deprived of the ceremonies of cakes and water offered to their manes, will sink down into the *infernal regions.*" Geeta. p. 3. The ceremony of the Stradha, which is here alluded to, has been explained before; to which I shall now add, from Mr Wilkins upon the passage, that, in those regions, the condemned are doomed to dwell "for a period *proportioned to their crimes,* after which they rise again to inhabit the bodies of unclean

* See the preface to the Code of Gentoo Laws, p. 46, edit. quarto, London, 1776.

beasts."

beasts." Both the astronomical phrase and the allegorical allusion are in direct terms mentioned in the following passage. "There are three passages to NARAKA; lust, anger, and avarice, which are the destroyers of the transmigrating soul; wherefore a man should avoid them; for, being freed from these GATES OF SIN, which arise from the influence of the TAMA-GOON, (those who inculcate the worship of departed spirits,) he advanceth his own happiness, and at length he goeth the JOURNEY OF THE MOST HIGH." Geeta, p. 118,

In the passages before-cited, the word *mansion*, or *abode*, is frequently used; and it has been proved, that the superior Boobuns are not less the mansions of departed piety than those of Naraka are of the guilty. Concerning the superior Boobuns, there is one or two of those extracts so very express, that I must be permitted to bring them again before the eye of the reader; in particular I wish him to re-peruse that passage in which Kreeshna tells Arjun, that all THE REGIONS between this and the ABODE of Brahma afford but a transient residence; and that in which the same incarnate deity declares, that the virtuous shall be rewarded with "the REGIONS OF EENDRA, the prince of celestial beings, in which HEAVEN they feast upon celestial food and divine enjoyment."

Geeta,

Geeta, p. 80. "They, who are acquainted with day and night, know that the day of Brahma is as a thousand revolutions of the YUGS,* and that his night extendeth for a thousand more: as, on the coming of that day, all things proceed from invisibility to *visibility*, so, on the approach of that night, they are all dissolved in that which is called *invisible:* even the universe itself, having existed, is again dissolved; and now again, on the approach of Brahma's day, by the same divine over-ruling necessity, it is re-produced. That which, upon the dissolution of all things beside, is not destroyed, must be superior and of another nature from that visibility; it is invisible and eternal. He, who is thus called invisible and incorruptible, is even he who is called the SUPREME ABODE; which men having once obtained, they never return to earth; that is my MANSION!" Allusive, doubtless, to the transmigration of the soul through the seven sidereal abodes of spirits in the progress of purification, all finally terminating in the most sublime and exalted, Arjoon,

* The YUGS are certain grand periods, alluding to the revolutions of the heavenly bodies; they are in number four, and will be amply explained hereafter. The vanity of the Brahmin chronologists has induced them to apply to terrestrial concerns the vast periods used in sidereal computation.

in

in page 94 of the same episode, in this style of elevated piety, addresses the Supreme Being. "Thou, O mighty Being, greater than Brahma, art the prime Creator! eternal God of gods! the world's MANSION! Thou art the incorruptible Being, distinct from all things transient! Thou art before all gods, the antient POORUSH, and the supreme supporter of the universe! Thou knowest all things, and art worthy to be known! Thou art the SUPREME MANSION; and by thee, O infinite Form! the universe was spread abroad." In page 75, recently cited, occurs that very curious passage quoted in a former part of this Dissertation, as having an undoubted astronomical allusion, and which I shall again insert with the addition of the context, since it appears very evidently to inculcate a doctrine not only congenial with that of the Greek philosophers, but with the hypothesis of the two principles of LIGHT and DARKNESS, or rather GOOD and EVIL, in the Persian code of philosophical theology. "I will now (continues Creeshna) speak to thee of that time in which, should a devout man die, he will never return; and of that time, in which, dying, he shall return again upon the earth. Those holy men, who are acquainted with BRAHME, departing this life in the fiery light of the day, in the bright

season

season of the moon, WITHIN THE SIX MONTHS OF THE SUN'S NORTHERN course, go unto him, but those who depart in the gloomy night of the moon's dark season, and while THE SUN IS YET WITHIN THE SOUTHERN PARTS OF HIS JOURNEY, ascend, for a while, into the regions of the moon, and again return to mortal birth. These two, LIGHT and DARKNESS, are esteemed the world's eternal ways. He, who walketh in the *former* path, (of light, or piety,) returneth not; while he, who walketh in the latter path, (darkness, or evil,) cometh back again upon the earth." Geeta, p. 76. It is impossible to avoid observing in this passage the origin of the doctrine of the TWO PRINCIPLES of the Persian philosophers, with which nation, it has already been observed, the Indians had an immemorial intercourse.

SECTION VI.

In this short intervening Section, which prevents the immediate Continuation of the History of the antient Mysteries, some remarkable Testimonies, in Proof of the above Assertions, are brought from certain scarce and valuable Manuscripts, which have been imported into Europe by learned Oriental Travellers, and which contain Engravings, executed in India, illustrative of their antient Doctrines in regard to the Metempsychosis, as well as of the early Periods of their History.—A Description of one very curious astronomical Plate, which represents the Convulsion of Nature at the General Deluge, or the COURMA AVATAR.—*A Digression on that Subject, proving that all the three first Avatars, or Incarnations of the Deity, are astronomical Allegories allusive to that calamitous Event.*

THE passages presented to the reader in the preceding section are not the only ones in which the gradual ascent of the soul through

through the planets, or spheres of purification, is plainly intimated in the Geeta. They are, however, sufficient for our purpose; and, in proof that the Indians actually had, in the remotest æras, in their system of theology, the sidereal ladder of seven gates, so universally made use of as a symbol throughout all the East, I have now to inform the reader of the following circumstance: — there exists, at present, in the royal library at Paris, a book of paintings entirely allusive to the Indian mythology and the incarnations of Veeshnu, in one of which is exhibited this very symbol, upon which the souls of men are represented as ascending and descending, according to the received opinion of the sidereal Metempsychosis in Asia. Of this curious volume a friend at Paris has procured me very minute information, and I have hopes of presenting my readers with a correct copy of this painting before these extensive Dissertations shall have been concluded.

Two other books, adorned with similar paintings, illustrative of Indian subjects, which are in the possession of the literati of this country, deserve, in this place, particular notice. The first is that in the Bodleian library, presented to the University of Oxford by Mr Pope, and affirmed, in the letter of that author

which accompanied the donation, to contain "one hundred and seventy-eight portraits of the Indian rajahs, continued down to Timur, and the Great Moguls, his successors, as far as Aurungzebe."* The account of this book by Mr Cleland, prefixed to Dr White's and Mr Davy's translation of the Institutes of Timur, establishes the authenticity of it; for, "that the pictures it contains are not fancy pictures there is this solid reason to believe, it being well known that such a set of pictures actually exists in the royal palace." He adds, "it is observable, that the Moorish or Mohamedan sovereigns of Hindostan are, in this collection, distinguished from those of Gentoo descent by the fashion of the skirts of their robes, which, in the Gentoos, hang on each side, cut at the bottom into an angular form, as all the rajahs wear them at this day for an ensign of royalty."† From this book I hope to obtain the permission of the University to engrave the portraits of some of the more distinguished characters that have swayed the imperial sceptre of a people, who, with their august sovereigns, have been hitherto so little

* These are the words of Mr Pope's letter, written in the year 1737, and inserted in the Preface to the Institutes of Timur.

† See the preface to Dr White's Institutes of Timur.

known;

known; of a people, who, in the remote and beautiful regions of Hindostan, for many ages, seem to have shunned all intercourse with their fellow-mortals, and, at present, are very inaccurately delineated on the historic page in proportion to the importance and extent of their vast empire in Asia, to the consummate wisdom of their policy, and the distinguished splendour of their exploits.

The remaining volume, which merits our present notice, and will claim our more particular attention hereafter, is that in the possession of the Society of Antiquaries in London, presented, I believe, by Mr Hastings, and which, if I may judge from a survey of it, permitted me by the obliging attention of the secretary of that society, is entirely upon the subject of the nine incarnations of the god Veeshnu. In rather a transient view of its contents, I was particularly struck with a minute delineation of the COURMA AVATAR, or Veeshnu's descent in the form of a tortoise to support the earth sinking in the ocean, and of the curious Indian historical fable of the Soors and Asoors churning that ocean with the mountain Mandar. Around this vast mountain the serpent ASOOKEE is represented as twined in dreadful folds, by way of a rope, at the head and tail of which those imaginary

beings are pulling with all their might, to make the churned deep disgorge the precious things swallowed up in a certain great deluge, which, notwithstanding all sceptical opposition, was undoubtedly the deluge of Noah. The above circumstances must appear so very romantic to the reader, that, as some period will still elapse before I can proceed to the historical detail and explanation of the Avatars, I shall insert a few lines, illustrative of it, from Mr Wilkins's translation of that part of the Mahabbarat in which it occurs, and which he will find in page 146 of the Geeta. This account, adduced immediately from such respectable authority, will at once serve to gratify curiosity and rescue myself from censure in enumerating particulars so wildly theological, but still so absolutely necessary to be known to the reader before he can obtain the full comprehension of the antient Sanscreet history of Hindostan; it will likewise afford a specimen of the romantic style in which that first and most celebrated Indian history is writen.

Prefatory to this extract I must observe, that the Soors, being assembled in solemn consultation upon the sparkling summit of the great golden mountain MERU, or SOMMEIR, asserted, in the Geographical Dissertation, to be

be situated in the centre of our globe, and to be of the altitude of at least 16,000 YOJANS,* were meditating the discovery of the AMREETA, or water of immortality, under which allegory is shadowed out the re-animation of nature after the general desolation made by the deluge. The sea was to be deeply agitated by the impetuous rotation of the mountain Mandar; but, as the united bands of Dewtahs were unable to remove this mountain, they went before Veeshnu, who was sitting with Brahma, and addressed them in these words; "Exert, sovereign beings, your most superior wisdom to remove the mountain Mandar, and employ your utmost power for our good." Veeshnu and Brahma having replied, "It shall be according to your wish:" HE, with the lotos eye, directed the king of serpents to appear. Ananta arose, and was instructed in that work by Brahma, and commanded by Narayen to perform it. Then Ananta, by his power, took up that king of mountains, together with all its forests and every inhabitant thereof; and the Soors accompanied him into the presence of the Ocean, whom they addressed, saying, "We will stir up thy waters to obtain the Amreeta;" and the lord of the

* The YOJAN is an antient Indian measure, in extent about four miles.

waters replied, "Let me also have a share, seeing I am to bear the violent agitations that will be caused by the whirling of the mountain." Then the Soors and Asoors spake unto Courma-rajah, the king of the tortoises, upon the strand of the ocean, and said, "My lord is able to be the supporter of this mountain." The tortoise replied, "Be it so!" and it was placed upon his back.

"So, the mountain being set upon the back of the tortoise, Eendra began to whirl it about as it were a machine. The mountain Mandar served as a churn, and the serpent Vasookee for the rope; and thus, in *former days*, did the Dewtahs, the Asoors, and the Danoos, begin to stir up the waters of the ocean for the discovery of the Amreeta. The mighty Asoors were employed on the side of the serpent's head, while all the Soors assembled about his tail. Ananta, that sovereign DEW, stood near Narayen.

"They now pull forth the serpent's head repeatedly, and as often let it go: while there issued from his mouth, thus violently drawing to and fro by the Soors and Asoors, a continual stream of fire, and smoke, and wind; *which, ascending in thick clouds replete with lightning, it began to rain down* upon the heavenly bands, who were already fatigued with their labour,

labour, while a shower of flowers was shaken from the top of the mountain, covering the heads of all, both Soors and Asoors. In the mean time, *the roaring of the ocean, while violently agitated* with the whirling of the mountain Mandar by the Soors and Asoors, was like the bellowing of a mighty cloud. Thousands of the various productions of the waters were torn to pieces by the mountain and confounded with the briny flood; and every specific being of the deep and all the inhabitants *of the great abyss which is below the earth were annihilated*; while, from the violent agitation of the mountain, the forest-trees were dashed against each other, and precipitated from its utmost height, with all the birds thereon; from the violent confrication of all which a raging fire was produced, involving the whole mountain with smoke and flame, as with a dark blue cloud and the vivid flash of lightning. The lion and the retreating elephant are overtaken by the devouring flames, and every vital being and every individual object are consumed in the general conflagration. The raging flames, thus spreading destruction on all sides, were at length quenched by a shower of cloud-borne water poured down by the immortal Eendra. And now a heterogeneous stream of the concocted juice of various trees and

and plants ran down into the briny flood. It was from this milk-like stream of juices, produced from those streams, trees, and plants, and a mixture of melted gold, that the Soors obtained their immortality."*

Concerning these extravagant mythological details of the Hindoos, I must remark, that, however mysterious the allegory, and however wild and romantic the language in which it is clothed, this fact may be depended upon, that there, in general, lies concealed at the bottom some physical meaning or deep theological truth. Divested of its inflated diction and fabulous incidents, the invention of an Oriental fancy, what can this general and stupendous convulsion of nature; — the mountain buried in the tempestuous bosom of the ocean; the ocean roaring and raging amidst the conflict of contending elements; the torrents of descending rain poured down by Eendra, the Hindoo god of the firmament; the total annihilation of every living thing on the mountain, and of all the inhabitants of *the great abyss* which is below the earth; (an expression very similar to the Scripture-phrase of *all the fountains of the great deep*;) — what can all this accumulation of magnificent and dreadful

* Geeta, p. 146, 147, 148.

images

images shadow out except the desolation of the earth during the period of the universal deluge; when the Soors and Asoors, who may be considered as the ætherial ministers of the divine vengeance, were commissioned to harass the agitated globe? What can the incarnation of Veeshnu, the preserving power of India, in the form of a vast tortoise, which incarnation constitutes the second or COURMA AVATAR, to support the ponderous mass on the strand of the ocean, portend, but the benevolent intervention of Providence, personified by the incarnation of Veeshnu, to save from total destruction a perishing world? Who is that physician so renowned in antient Sanscreet histories, the great DEW Danwantaree, who at length rose from the churned ocean, the white foam of which resembled milk, bearing in his hand a sacred vase full of the water of life, and who himself is even represented in some of those histories as a transformation of Veeshnu? who, I say, is to be understood by that fictitious character, unless the venerable sage who rose from the ocean, who gave new life to his expiring species, and in his family upheld the human race: that pious patriarch, who, after his emerging from the hoary deep, *builded an altar unto the Lord*, and offered the *first grateful oblation* after the deluge;

deluge; (circumstances recorded amidst the constellations of the Southern sphere;) that mythologic character, who is represented upon it as the *sacrificer of the beast*; that profound philosopher whose knowledge of the ante-diluvian astronomy enabled him to form that sphere, and who placed THE SHIP, by Grecian mythologists usurped, and ridiculously called ARGO, there? The Greeks, however, remarkably corroborating my hypothesis, denominated this asterism of the SACRIFICER, CHIRON, whom Pliny describes "as the son of Saturn (TIME) and Philira, the inventor of the BOTANICAL and MEDICAL art.* And justly may the SACRIFICER be denominated Chiron, that true Chiron of antiquity, though not of Grecian origin, nor the preceptor of Achilles; that great botanist, who first planted the vine and returned to the ground that infinite variety "*of medical herbs and innumerable seeds*," which, in the antient Sanscreet histories, and particularly in Sir William Jones's translation of the BHAGAVAT, MENU is represented as taking into the ark for the express purpose of renovating decayed vegetation after the deluge; that nobler CENTAUR, who was indeed born of a *cloud*, in the same

* Plinii Nat. Hist. lib. vii. cap. 56.

manner

manner as the Chinese Fohi is represented in their histories to have had a *rainbow* for his progenitor; who, as the name *Centaur* properly signifies, first tamed the fierce bull, and who, having taught mankind the use of agriculture, was thence not only represented in all the Oriental mythologies by the apt symbol of the BULL, but, if M. Anquetil, in the Zend-Avesta, may be credited, in the antient Persian histories, was called *l'homme-taureau.** Such is the true meaning of this Avatar; and such, in my humble opinion, is the true Danwantaree of India, who sprang from the foam of the churned ocean, bearing the Amreeta, or vital ambrosia, to the renovated world. I would not be understood, however, to have asserted that Danwantaree and Noah are the same person, except in a mythological sense; for, Menu, or Satyaurata, who was the author of the famous Institutes, at first orally promulgated by that legislator, afterwards committed to writing, and called after him MENUMSRITI, is the undoubted and only genuine Noah of India; but I mean, that, under the character of Danwantaree rising from the ocean, this venerable personage is intended and symbolised. According to M. Sonnerat,

* See M. Anquetil du Perron's Zend-Avesta, tom. iii. p. 368.

he

he is generally depicted in the pagodas, sacred to Veeshnu, as a learned man, in profound meditation, with a book in his hand.

Sir William Jones, without favouring us with any farther explanation of his meaning, confesses himself to be of opinion, that a considerable portion of this particular Avatar relates to astronomy. For my own part, I entertain little doubt but that the serpent Asookee, whose enormous body enfolded the globe, is no other than the celestial serpent, or dragon, whose baleful influence is represented in all Oriental systems of astrology to be so fatal to the revolving spheres, or else that whimsical representation of a still more visionary dragon, formed by the course of the moon near the ECLIPTIC, of whose BELLY, HEAD, and TAIL, is exhibited, in a preceding page, an astronomico-mythological engraving. By this allegory do not the Brahmin astronomers mean to indicate that some dreadful position of the planetary orbs, which are often represented, in Sanscreet writings, as personified Dewtahs, occasioned the grand convulsion; or that some fatal ECLIPSE, which ever happens near that region of the heaven where their fancies have fixed their imaginary Dragon, portended and accompanied it? Surely the supposition of such an event, as a secondary cause, proves neither

neither bad theology nor despicable philosophy to exist in Hindostan; for, notwithstanding some difficulties in Whiston's system, that a comet passed at that remote æra near the orbit of the earth, and caused the inundation, that hypothesis is not destitute of able advocates. But we see that, by this relation, a devouring fire, as well as a tempestuous ocean, contributed to the general devastation! Is it not possible, that some of the more antient Sanscreet books may contain, traditionally handed down, a genuine and circumstantial relation of this awful event? But, if that should not be the case, is not this account entirely conformable to the ingenious conjectures of the great naturalist Mr Whitehurst, who is decidedly of opinion, that fire, bursting from the internal regions of the earth, greatly contributed to bring on the dreadful catastrophe in which nature agonized and a world was destroyed. Mr Whitehurst does not stand single in this opinion. His supposition is corroborated by one of the greatest chemists of the age, WATSON, a name on whtch titles can confer no additional splendour. A more full investigation, however, of this point, and from others of equal novelty and importance to the theological and literary world, must be reserved

reserved for that portion of this history which treats of the cosmogony of the Hindoos.

Since the Avatars themselves, that is, the descents of the deity in a human form, may be considered as connected with, if not as originally giving birth to, the doctrine of the Metempsychosis; for, with the Indians, that deity is considered only as the *Anima Mundi*, or Soul of the World, of whom the particular definition in the Bhagavat is, that "HE IS EVERY WHERE ALWAYS;" it will not be thought entirely digressive, if, while upon this subject, I pursue somewhat farther the reflections to which the Courma-Avatar has given birth. Truth, therefore, compels me to add, to what has been already observed, that the more minutely the *three first Avatars* are examined, the more directly will each of those Avatars be found to be illustrative of the great event above alluded to; while the united evidence, arising from them, reflects a light upon that event greater than has yet radiated upon it from any page of Gentile antiquity. "They all three," says the president of the Asiatic Society, "apparently relate to some stupendous convulsion of our globe from the fountains of the deep." * In direct proof of

† Asiatic Researches, vol. i. p. 235.

Sir

THE MATSE AVATAR



Barlow sculp.

The first Indian AVATAR, denominated that of MATSE; representing the incarnation of VEESHNU in the form of A FISH: & in the Opinion of S.r William Jones, pointedly allusive to the GENERAL DELUGE.

Sir William's assertion, I shall, in this place, somewhat prematurely present the reader with a print of the first of those Avatars, which was copied by one of the Roman missionaries from the walls of an Indian pagoda, on which the ten transformations of Veeshnu were delineated in the successive order in which they take place.

The following are in brief the outlines of the allegory, extracted from the Bhagavat, where may be found the passage from the same book cited above.

Near the close of the last CALPA, (a period of duration of astronomical origin, and refering to the rate of the *precession of the equinoxes*, but stated in the Surya Siddhanta as equal to a thousand maha yugs, or grand revolutions,) BRAHMA, fatigued with the care of so many worlds, fell into a profound slumber. During this slumber of the creator, the strong dæmon or giant Hayagriva came near him and stole the VEDAS; those four sacred volumes which originally flowed from the lips of the quadruple deity. With this inestimable treasure he retired into the deep and secret bosom of the ocean; and, resolving never to surrender the booty he had secured, swallowed the stolen Vedas. Deprived of the vigilant care of Brahma, the world fell into disorder: while, no

longer guided by the light that emanated from the sacred books, the human race became, to the last degree, corrupt. They were all consequently destroyed in a vast deluge, except a certain pious king and his family, which, in very singular conformity to the relation of Sacred Writ, consisted of *seven persons*, who floated upon the waters in a vessel fabricated according to the express direction of Veeshnu. For, this pious monarch, one day performing his devotions on the shore of the ocean, was forewarned of the approaching calamity by that preserving deity: and having prepared a vessel, as commanded, at the appointed time, Veeshnu appeared again in the form of a fish, "blazing like gold, and extending a million of leagues, with one stupendous horn," to which the king fastened the vessel by a cable composed of a vast serpent, and was thus towed in safety along the surface of the raging element. When the waters abated, he and his companions were again safely landed. Veeshnu then, re-plunging into the ocean, slew, in conflict, the tremendous dæmon Hayagriva, and, rending open the monster's belly, recovered three of the Vedas, but the fourth, according to the allegory, was digested.—The plate annexed discovers Veeshnu rising from the ocean after vanquishing the dæmon, whose head,

head, decorated with horns like those of all other princely personages in Oriental mythology, is seen floating upon the waves below. Veeshnu appears as if presenting the sacred books, which he had thus recovered, to Brahma, who is discerned above. The third, or Vara Avatar, is not less pointedly allusive to the same awful event. In this incarnation, Veeshnu assumes the form of a BOAR, and lifts up upon his huge tusks the ponderous globe, which another dæmon, (an agent ever present in Hindoo mythology,) equally gigantic and malignant, after rolling it up like a scroll, had carried away on his shoulders and buried deep in the abyss.

The meaning of all this is so obvious as to preclude the necessity of insisting, in this place, how clearly the assertion of Sir William Jones, as to the three first Avatars, is demonstrated. I shall return, therefore, in the next section, to the farther consideration of that curious doctrine, the Metempsychosis, to which, probably, that of the Avatars originally gave birth, and of the antient mysteries, in which, according to Mr Bryant, its stupendous arcana were unveiled.

SECTION VII.

The Subject of the Metempsychosis, and the ANTIENT MYSTERIES, *resumed.—The former Doctrine the Source of all the horrible Penances which the Hindoos undergo in the Hope of regaining their State of primitive Perfection and Happiness.—The Fall of Man, therefore, a Doctrine necessarily believed in India.—The Nature of the Deity, and his Attributes, unfolded in the Mysteries by physical Symbols, as, for instance, his creative Energy by the Phallus, or Lingam; his spotless Purity by the* τα θεια Φωτα, *or transparent Orbs of dazzling Brightness, &c. &c.—A still sublimer Theology, however, somewhat resembling the Patriarchal, pervaded the Asiatic World, and particularly flourished in the School of the great Indian Philosopher* VYASA.—*The secret Operations also of Nature herself, when considered distinctly from the Great First Cause, as well in the superior as in the subterraneous World, engrossed a Part of the antient Mysteries, and the Effects of physical, not less than moral,*

moral, GOOD *and* EVIL *were successively and powerfully displayed.—The physical Symbol illustrative of the creative Energy, in the End, produced the most unbounded Licentiousness.—The Women of the Idol, a Species of holy Prostitutes, the Result in India; the Bacchic Revels and Debaucheries, the Consequence in Greece, a Nation which borrowed its Theology from* INDIA *through some Medium hitherto inadequately explored.—The several Stages of the Eleusinian Mysteries described from Greek Writers who had been initiated.—Their Analogy to the sacred Festival-Pomps of India, as painted in the Pagodas, and as at this Day celebrated in various Parts of India, adduced as unequivocal Evidence of their having originated in the latter Country.*

FROM the collective evidence exhibited in the preceding pages, the assertion with which I commenced these particular strictures on the Metempsychosis, that the professed design of it was to restore the fallen soul to its pristine state of purity and perfection, is proved beyond contradiction. Thus, an interesting and astonishing prospect unfolds itself to our view. Their sacred writings, we see, represent the whole universe as an ample

and august theatre for the probationary exertion of millions of beings, who are supposed to be so many spirits degraded from the high honours of angelic distinction, and condemned to ascend, through various gradations of toil and suffering, until they shall have reached that exalted sphere of perfection and happiness which they enjoyed before their defection. Animated by the desire of obtaining that final boon, and fired by all the glorious promises of the Vedas, the patient Hindoo smiles amidst unutterable misery and exults in every dire variety of voluntary torture. In the hope of expiating former crimes by adequate penance, and of regaining speedily that fancied Elysium, he binds himself to the performance of vows which make human nature shudder and human reason stagger. He passes whole weeks without the smallest nourishment and whole years in painful vigils. He wanders about naked, as he came from the womb of his parent, and suffers, without repining, every vicissitude of heat and cold, of driving storm and beating rain. He stands with his arms crossed above his head, till the sinews shrink and the flesh withers away. He fixes his eye upon the burning orb of the sun, till its light be extinguished and its moisture entirely

entirely dried up.* Is is impossible to read the following minute dascription of one of these devotees in the act of stationary penance, as given in the Sacontala, without shuddering. Every circumstance enumerated fills the mind with increasing horror, and freezes the astonished reader to a statue, almost as immoveable as the suffering penitent. Dushmanta asks; "Where is the holy retreat of Maricha?"—Matali *replies*, "A little beyond that grove, where you see a pious YOGEE, motionless as a pollard, holding his thick bushy hair, and *fixing his eyes on the solar orb.*—Mark, his body *is half-covered with a white ant's edifice*, made of raised clay; *the skin of a snake* supplies the place of his sacerdotal thread and part of it girds his loins; a number of *knotted plants* encircle and wound his neck, and *surrounding birds nests* almost cover his shoulders." Sacontala, p. 87. But I am anticipating a subject upon which I must hereafter enlarge, when I come to compare the antient Gymnosophist and the modern Yogee.

* Every circumstance enumerated above is particularised and was seen by Tavernier in India. See Voyage de Tavernier, tom. iv, p. 118. edit. 1713, with an engraving annexed. I shall, in a future page, state some still more wonderful, but well-authenticated, relations of Indian mortification.

But to what source is this doctrine of spirits fallen from their original rectitude, a doctrine which not only infected India but all the Eastern world, to be traced? One probable source of it has been already stated to have originated in the anxiety of the antient philosophers, to justify the divine attributes, and vindicate the ways of God to man; but the more probable source seems to have been some obscure and corrupted tradition of the *fallen angels*, handed down through successive generations from the great progenitor of the human race, and his immediate descendants, with whom celestial spirits are represented as frequently conversing, and to whom they might, as a friendly warning, have imparted the intelligences. If this mode of accounting for the origin of so singular a doctrine should appear unsatisfactory, much more so must every other prove: for, after all, one indubitable fact must still be admitted in this kind of discussion, viz. that what belongs to *past* or *future* scenes of existence can only be known to mankind through the MEDIUM OF REVELATION.

No precepts so severe as these were indeed taught by the divines and philosophers of Egypt and Greece. Neither in the mystic cells of the former, nor in the Eleusinian sanctuaries

of

of the latter, was the doctrine of the Metempsychosis carried to such an extreme point of speculative investigation as in the sacred caverns of India; but that the precepts taught and the rites celebrated, in both countries, were in a striking degree similar, will be more clearly manifested by the succeeding enumeration of particular parallel circumstances that distinguished them. Immersed in the errors of polytheism as was the great body of the Egyptian nation, it has yet been incontestably proved,* by the immortal Cudworth, that the hierophant, or arch-priest, in the secret rites of their religion, taught the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead; but this noble sentiment, though they had the *magnanimity* to conceive, they wanted the *generosity* to impart to the deluded populace; for, it was thought dangerous, both to the church and the state, to shake the foundations of the reigning superstition. But, to those speculative and philosophic minds, that possessed sufficient firmness to bear the communication of so lofty and important a truth, the whole scene of vulgar delusion was laid bare, and the mystic veil, that obscured the "Great First Cause" from the view of his creatures, was rent

* See Cudworth's Intellectual System, chap. v, sect. 18.

asunder;

asunder; while the *initiated* were taught, that Jupiter, Vulcan, Mercury, and the rest of the deities, who were the object of popular devotion, were nothing more than departed human beings, deified by grateful posterity for the virtues they had practised during life and the benefits they had conferred upon mankind.

Mr Hastings, one of the most early and liberal patrons of Sanscreet literature in India, in a letter to Nathaniel Smith, Esq. one of its most zealous encouragers in England, has remarked how accurately many of the leading principles of the pure unadulterated doctrines of Brahma correspond with those of the Christian system.* In the Geeta, indeed, some passages, surprisingly consonant, occur, concerning the sublime nature and attributes of God as well as concerning the properties and functions of the soul. Thus, where the Deity, in the form of Creeshna, addresses Arjun: "I am the Creator of all things, and all things proceed from me." "I am the beginning, the middle, and the end, of all things; I am time; I am all-grasping death, and I am the resurrection; I am the

* See Mr Hasting's recommendatory letter to N. Smith, Esq. at that time chairman of the East-India Company, and prefixed to the GEETA.

mystic

mystic figure OM! I am generation and dissolution!" Arjun, in pious ecstasy, exclaims; "Reverence! reverence! be unto thee a thousand times repeated! Again and again reverence! O thou, who art all in all! infinite in thy power and thy glory! Thou art the Father of all things animate and inanimate! there is none like unto thee!" P. 95. And again, where Creeshna describes the nature of the soul:—"The soul is not a thing of which a man may say it hath been, it is about to be, or is to be hereafter; for, it is a thing without birth, it is incorruptible, eternal, inexhaustible! the weapon divideth it not, the fire burneth it not, the water corrupteth it not, the wind drieth it not away, for, it is indivisible, inconsumable, unalterable!" P. 37. Sir William Jones has been at the pains of translating four stanzas of the BHAGAVAT, which he says, are scrupulously literal, and which I shall take the liberty of transcribing, since they afford not only a striking proof of the sublime notions which the Hindoos entertain concerning the Deity, but exhibit a curious specimen of the style in which their sacred books are written. The words, he observes, are believed by the Hindoos to have been pronounced to Brahma by the Supreme Being himself.

"Even

" Even I was even at the first, not any other thing; that which exists, unperceived, supreme; afterwards, I AM THAT WHICH IS, and he WHO MUST REMAIN am I.

" Except the FIRST CAUSE, whatever may appear or may not appear in the mind, know that to be the mind's MAYA, (or *delusion,*) as light, as darkness.

" As the great elements are in various beings, entering yet not entering; (that is, pervading, not destroying;) thus am I in them, yet not in them.

" Even thus far may inquiry be made by him, who seeks to know the principle of mind, in union and separation, which must be EVERY WHERE ALWAYS.'

Wild and obscure, Sir William observes, as these antient verses must appear in a naked verbal translation, it will be thought, by many, that the poetry of Greece and Italy affords no conceptions more awfully magnificent.* The first stanza brings irresistably to our recollection that sublime verse of the Apocalypse; I am ALPHA and OMEGA, the Beginning and the Ending, saith the Lord; which is, and which was, and which is to come, the ALMIGHTY." I earnestly entreat the candid

* Asiatic Researches, vol. i. p. 246.

reader

reader to take notice, that, when, in various parts of this treatise, I have spoken of the pure and sublime theology of Brahma, I have constantly alluded to these and similar original passages in their most sacred books, and not to those wild schemes of theology, engrafted upon it by commenting Brahmins, nor the complex and degrading system of devotion at present prevailing in Hindostan. Astonished at the striking similarity that subsists between the religious principles of the Hindoos and those of the Christian faith, the learned Hyde * boldly pronounced, that BRAHMA must have been the patriarch ABRAHAM. Postellus, † however, had, long before, asserted the same thing, with this additional circumstance, that the tribe of Brahmins were the descendants of that patriarch by his wife Keturah, and were so called, *quasi Abrahmanes.* He might, by parity of reasoning, have derived the name of the second great Indian, or Kettri, tribe from Kiturah, from which it is not very dissimilar; but, in this case, unfortunately the same argument would hold good as that before-urged against the probability that Zoroaster was of Judaic extraction: the total silence of the

* Hyde, Hist. Relig. vet. Pers. p. 31.

† Abraham Postellus in Commentario ad Jezirah.

Vedas

Vedas in regard to circumcision. The Arabs, who are descended from Abraham by Ishmael, and are likewise jealous of the invaded honours of the great patriarch their progenitor, contend, that Brahma and Abraham are the same, and Herbelot* informs us, that a Brahmin, named Bethergir, converted to Mahommedism, communicated to those Arabs the book called L'Ambertkend, which he calls, Livre qui contient tous les Dogmes de la Religion des Indiens, but of which book I have not been able to gain any tidings, and the description seems alone applicable to the Vedas. A very interesting, and, if true, a very important, piece of historical information is related in the "Account of the East-Indies," by Mr Hamilton, since it appears to account for a very large portion of those ten dispersed tribes, whose place of residence, ever since the period of their captivity, has so long been the object of curious investigation among the learned. A colony of Jews, to the amount of no less than eighty thousand families, is asserted, by

* See Herbelot Biblioth. Orient. under the article *Behergir*, in which a mistake of this great Orientalist should be corrected, since he calls him, Un Brahman de la secte, ou de l'ordre, de ceux que l'on appelle Gioghis (Yogees). Now the Yogees are not Brahmins, but candidates for that order. My edition of Herbelot is that of Maestricht, 1776.

that

that author, on the authority of the Dutch records at Crangamore, on the coast of Malabar, to have antiently flourished, in the kingdom of Cochin, under elders and judges of their own election. Their traditional history, which they anxiously preserve on copper-plates, deeply engraved in Hebrew characters, deposited in the sanctuary of the synagogue, relates, that their ancestors came thither before the downfall of the Babylonian empire; and that history descends, in a regular series of events, from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar to the present time. It announces them to be of the tribe of Manasses, and describes their tedious journey of three years from Babylon to the coast of Malabar, the various sufferings which this miserable and exiled race, amounting to twenty thousand families, endured in their progress thither, the hospitable reception they met with from the natives, their thriving commerce, their increasing population, the period of their highest power and aggrandization, and that of their gradual decline, down to their present number, of about four thousand families only. A similar colony, if we may believe the Jesuits, established themselves in China.

Although I thought it incumbent upon me to mention these circumstances, yet I am cautious

tious of urging any argument that may seem to arise from this evidence of the antient intercourse which the Indians enjoyed with the chosen people of God, for, polytheism has ever flourished with more vigour in the Peninsula than on the continent of India. From this source, then, I dare not assert, that the Hindoos derived their purer theological tenets, since those tenets appear to me to be of superior antiquity. It is only from NOAH himself, their famed MENU, the great inspired prophet of the ante-diluvian race of mortals, and the august father of the present, or else from one or other of the sons of the righteous SHEM, who might make this happy region their early abode, that this unfathomable antiquity of the Brahmin scriptures allows me to derive the grand *principia* of their *almost Christian* theology; that august fabric, of which we observe the UNITY OF GOD forms the central pillar. This sublime doctrine OF AN INVISIBLE, ETERNAL, AND SELF-EXISTENT GOD, WHOM ALL SYMBOLICAL REPRESENTATION MUST DEGRADE, has ever been upheld by those among them who have dared to divulge a dogma kept profoundly secret from the vulgar, whose sensual conceptions, they imagined, were only to be actuated upon, and whose stubborn minds were only to be kept in sacred subjection to an arbitrary

arbitrary priesthood by external objects, and who, consequently, were permitted to plunge by degrees into the lowest abyss of gross and multifarious idolatry. They were first suffered to adore the attributes of God under representative figures, decorated with emblematical ornaments; they were next allowed to pay divine honours to rajahs, in whom the Deity had condescended to become incarnate, and who were, therefore, supposed to be invested with a portion of his divinity; for, the doctrine of the AVATARS, or descents of Deity in the form of man, undoubtedly, contributed to keep alive, if it did not originally give birth to, the belief of the Metempsychosis, as well as to cherish the errors of idol-worship in India. The symbol in time came to be adored instead of the original, the rajah was honoured in the place of his Creator. The more artful and luxurious Brahmin, who, under the garb of austerity and sanctity, fattened upon the spoils of superstition, beheld and exulted in the success of his project; he crowded the sculptured wall of the sacred cavern with symbolical figures and statues of deified rajahs; he bade the people approach them with holy reverence, and he excited their wonder and respect by recounting to them the heroic feats they had performed during the period of their

 sojourning

sojourning with mortals. But this alone was not sufficient; terror has a more lasting influence than admiration upon the human mind. With the symbolic figures of the mercy and goodness of God were blended those of his justice and his wrath. As the former were sculptured with smiling aspects, and were decorated with the ensigns of peace and protection, so were the latter pourtrayed with horrible distorted visages, and arrayed with every dreadful symbol that could alarm and terrify the beholder. These figures, converted into dæmons, under the notion of being the avenging ministers of omnipotent justice, were most to the purpose of the priest. He recited their number, he magnified their enormous power, and he awakened the agonising terrors of his audience by impressing them with ideas of their constant and immediate interference in human affairs. To the gazing and infatuated multitude, who thronged the porches and the body of the august temple, he exclaimed: BEHOLD YOUR GODS! and the imagination was acted upon in the same manner as at this moment, in the modern pagodas, by descriptive paintings, by expressive symbols, and mysterious ceremonies and exhibitions. But, in every successive age of the Indian empire, from its foundation to the present time, there have not

not been wanting Brahmins who spurned at the interested practices of their brethren, and who opposed, as far as they dared, the prevailing torrent of idolatry that so widely overspread the land. Among these, the great VYASA, the Plato of India, holds the most distinguished rank; for, his design in writing the Geeta, as Mr Wilkins has told us in his judicious preface, seems to have been "to undermine certain tenets inculcated in the Vedas, by setting up the doctrine of the Unity of the Godhead in opposition to idolatrous sacrifices and the worship of images; for, although the author dared not make a direct attack, either upon the prevailing prejudices of the people or the divine authority of those antient scriptures, yet, by offering *eternal* happiness to such as worship BRAHME, the Almighty, while he declares the reward of such as follow other gods should be but a temporary reward in an inferior heaven, for a period measured by the extent of their virtues, his intention, doubtless, was to bring about the downfal of polytheism.*

Similar to this conduct was that of the hierophant in the mystic cells of Egypt. The

* Preface to the Geeta, p. 24.

immortal Cudworth * has indeed ably vindicated the Egyptian priests from the charge of atheism; but still the people were kept in profound ignorance of that great truth, the UNITY OF GOD, which was thought dangerous to reveal, lest a contempt of the established system and the downfal of the popular superstition should be the fatal consequence. They permitted, therefore, the multitude to remain plunged as they were in the depth of a gross and complicated idolatry; but, for those philosophic few who could bear the light of truth without being confounded by the blaze, they removed the mysterious veil, and displayed to them the Deity in the radiant glory of his UNITY. From the vulgar eye, however, these doctrines were kept inviolably sacred, and wrapt in the veil of impenetrable mystery. They were denominated MYSTERIES, as well because the initiated were enjoined to keep the doctrines inculcated and the rites practised in the secret cell sacred from the profane as because the former were constantly taught and the latter celebrated *εν σκοτω και νυκτι*, in the bosom of darkness and in the dead silence of the night. This profound darkness, this midnight silence, they imagined,

* See Cudworth's Intellectual System, chap. iv. p. 4, sect. 18.

threw

threw a kind of sacred horror over their rites, and the priests, both of Egypt and Athens, thought these a securer defence against intrusion than either the secret depths of those subterraneous caverns, in which they were originally celebrated, or the lofty walls, that, in succeeding ages, encircled the superb temple of Ceres at Eleusis. In the extensive review which Warburton has taken of this subject, after mentioning the division of the Eleusinian mysteries into the GREATER and the LESS, after stating that in the LESS was inculcated the general belief of a Providence and of a future state, and that they were only preparatory to the GREATER, that celebrated investigator of those mysteries thus proceeds; "But there was one insuperable obstacle in paganism to a life of purity and holiness, which was the vicious examples of their gods. *Ego, homuncio, hoc non facerem?* was the absolving formulary, whenever a man had determined to give a loose to his irregular appetites. There was a necessity therefore of remedying this evil, which could only be done by striking at the root of it; so that such of the initiated as were judged capable were made acquainted with the whole delusion. The mystagogue taught them, that Jupiter, Mercury, Venus, Mars, and the whole rabble of licentious deities,

ties, were indeed only DEAD MORTALS, subject in life to the same passions and vices with themselves: but, having been, in several instances, benefactors to mankind, grateful posterity had deified them, and, with their virtues, had indiscreetly canonized their vices. The fabulous gods being thus routed, the SUPREME CAUSE of all things, of course, took their place: him they were taught to consider as the Creator of the universe, who pervaded all things by his virtue, and governed all things by his providence. From this time, the inititiated had the title of Ἐπαπτης, or, *one that sees things as they are, without disguise*, whereas before he was called Μυϛης, which has a contrary signification,"* The reader will recollect, that there has been described, in the cavern of Elephanta, an interior recess, or sacellum, which, while the exterior temple was crowded with mythologic sculptures, possessed no ornament whatsoever, except one solitary but degrading emblem of the great Creator. However degrading the symbol, it was certainly intended to shadow out the ONE SUPREME DEITY and FATHER OF ALL. The exterior temple was, therefore, allotted for the performance of the blind and prostrate devotions of the multitude; and, at

* Divine Legation, vol. i. p. 148.

the

the same time, it must be owned, that many of the divinities, whose images are graven on those walls, were as remarkable for licentiousness, in the mythologic histories of the Hindoos, as ever were those of the Egyptians and Greeks in their fabulous annals. The external temple was also appropriated, like the body of the mystic temples of Egypt, to the initiation of the younger Brahmins into the lesser mysteries of the Hindoo religion and sciences, as well as to the celebration of the splendid rites of the former and the display of the wonderful arcana of the latter. The elder and more experienced votaries, the *Indian Epoptai*, were admitted into the internal sanctuary, and all the errors of vulgar polytheism, as in the greater mysteries of Egypt and Eleusis, were laid bare to their view. The DEITY broke forth in all the majesty of UNITY upon them, and the rising SUN of TRUTH dissipated the clouds of deception and allegory.

However defective and inconclusive may be thought the arguments brought by Warburton in support of the general hypothesis, which he laboured to establish in the Divine Legation, and however particularly erroneous and fanciful may appear his strictures upon the sixth Æneid of Virgil, in elucidation of the Eleusinian mysteries, yet, it must be owned,

 that

that he has displayed, in that work, a profundity of learning and a splendour of genius, that scarcely ever before concentrated their rays to illumine one publication. Proud to follow so exalted a guide, upon ground not altogether treacherous, I shall now proceed to state some farther particulars, which he has enumerated in relation to the present subject, and examine how far they may be compatible with the religious rites and sciences of India. In the first place, in confirmation of what has been just now advanced, may be urged a passage, quoted by the bishop from Clemens, that, with the principles of theology taught in the mysteries, were actually blended those that relate to natural history and philosophy; since that author expressly says, that the doctrines, delivered in the greater mysteries, treated concerning the universe: adding, "Here ends all instruction; things are seen as they are; and nature, and the things of nature, are given to be comprehended." The various mathematical symbols, and other philosophical apparatus, that ornamented the Mithratic caves of the Brahmins, added to what we have already stated concerning their extensive astronomical investigations, and the doctrines relative to the mundane system, which Ammianus Marcellinus affirms they imparted to the Persian legislator,

legislator, will be considered, I presume, as one strong proof of this assertion. But a still more decisive proof seems to arise from another passage, cited from Themistius, which describes the entrance of the initiated "into a region all over illuminated, and shining with a divine splendour," where the Αυτοπτον Αγαλμα, or self-conspicuous image, the mystic emblem of the great vivifying principle of nature, diffused around an inconceivable splendour. In the second place, and what is more remarkably to our present purpose, may be adduced the attestation inserted from Proclus; that, in the celebration of the mysteries, the initiated met many things, of multiform shapes and species, that prefigured the first GENERATION of the gods. The principal symbol alluded to in this place will be obvious to the reader, since *by the gods* are unquestionably meant the first race of deified mortals. The Sun, however, and elementary Fire, are emblems of the Deity, so frequently mentioned in ancient Sanscreet writings, and withal emblems so much more noble than that in question, that I cannot avoid retaining my *first* opinion on the subject; that they were the most early symbols of Deity exhibited in these recesses, and that the one intimated is only a base substitution, derived from the degenerate devotion

devotion established in Egypt by Ham. Indeed, the passage cited before seems incontestably to prove this point. To this may be added another, quoted from the scholiast, in the Oracles of Zoroaster, in which it is declared, that he, who is fully initiated, beholds τα θεια φωτα, or the DIVINE LIGHTS. And surely THE REFULGENT ORB OF DAY, surely that FIRE, which the Hermetic philosophers, in their enthusiastic strain, denominate the *radiant child of the sun*, are far more expressive, as they doubtless are more decent, emblems of the great generative and invigorating faculty of nature than that wretched device of a depraved mind. We have, however, seen the application of this symbol in the rites of Isis; and, if Tertullian may be credited, the very same indecent emblem was adored at Eleusis, and excited both the pointed ridicule and vehement reproaches of the fathers of the church. In fact, there can be but little doubt, and therefore it ought candidly to be allowed, that, originally, the pagan world, under the masculine symbol, worshipped, or pretended to worship, as the Hindoos at this day avow, the first creative energy, and, under the feminine symbol, (for both symbols were adored in that prostituted system of religion,) was typified Ceres, the earth, the

Dea

Dea Multimamma, the prolific parent of all things. Those, however, who thus emblematically represented the all-bounteous mother, the goddess of fertility, the bestower of fruits and grain, ought to have learned better, from a particular circumstance in the fabulous history of Ceres; for, when, in gratitude to the father of Triptolemus, she undertook the education of that youth, to hasten his maturity, she fed him in the day-time with divine milk and by night she covered him all over with GENIAL FIRE. But a little reflection will soon convince us, that, as persons of either sex were promiscuously allowed to be initiated, when the original physical cause by degrees came to be forgotten, what a general dissipation, what a boundless immorality, would be promoted by so scandalous an exhibition! The season of nocturnal gloom, in which those mysteries were performed, and the inviolable secrecy which accompanied the celebration of them, added to the inviting solitude of the scene, conspired at once to break down all the barriers of modesty, to overturn all the fortitude of manly virtue, and to rend the veil of modesty from the blushing face of virgin innocence. At length, licentious passion trampled upon the most sacred obstacles which law and religion united to raise against it.

it. The Bacchanal, frantic with midnight intemperance, polluted the secret sanctuary, and Prostitution sat THRONED upon the very altars of the gods. It is not my intention to stain these pages with a repetition of the enormous and aggravated impieties committed during the celebration of the mysteries of Bacchus at Rome, and so circumstantially recorded by the historian Livy,* nor the multiform impurities supposed to have been perpetrated in those of the BONA DEA; but the obscene abominations connived at in India, and even promoted by the more corrupt Brahmins, (I mean with respect to that ill-fated and prostituted race, denominated the WOMEN OF THE IDOL,) are too closely connected with the present unpleasing subject to be passed over in total silence. What I shall offer, on this curious subject, will be taken from two authentic books, written at very different periods, and therefore fully decisive as to the general prevalence of the institution from age to age; the Anciennes Rélations, and Les Voyages de M. Tavernier, the former written in the 9th, the latter in the 17th, century.

Incited unquestionably by the hieroglyphic emblem of vice, so conspicuously elevated and

* See Livii Hist. lib. 39.

so strikingly painted in the temples of MAHADEO, the priests of that deity industriously selected the most beautiful females that could be found; and, in their tenderest years, with great pomp and solemnity, consecrated them (as it is impiously called) to the service of the presiding divinity of the pagoda. They were trained up in every art to delude and to delight; and, to the fascination of external beauty, their artful betrayers added the attractions arising from mental accomplishments. Thus was an invariable rule of the Hindoos, *that women have no concern with literature*, dispensed with upon this infamous occasion. The moment these hapless victims reached maturity, they fell victims to the lust of the Brahmins. They were early taught to practise the most alluring blandishments, to roll the expressive eye of wanton pleasure, and to invite to criminal indulgence by stealing upon the beholder the tender look of voluptuous languishing. They were instructed to mould their elegant and airy forms into the most enticing attitudes and the most lascivious gestures, while the rapid and grateful motion of their feet, adorned with golden bells and glittering with jewels, kept unison with the exquisite melody of their voices. Every pagoda has a band of these young syrens, whose

whose business, on great festivals, is to dance in public before the idol, to sing hymns in his honour, and in private to enrich the treasury of that pagoda with the wages of prostitution. These women are not, however, regarded in a dishonourable light; they are considered as *wedded to the idol*, and they partake of the veneration paid to him. They are forbidden ever to desert the pagoda where they are educated, and are never permitted to marry; but the offspring, if any, of their criminal embraces, are considered as sacred to the idol; the boys are taught to play on the sacred instruments used at the festivals, and the daughters are devoted to the abandoned occupations of their mothers. The reader has, doubtless, heard and read frequently of the degeneracy and venality of PRIESTS, and we know, from Herodotus, what scandalous prostitutions were antiently *suffered** in honour of Mylitta; but a system of corruption, so systematical, so deliberate, and so nefarious, and that professedly carried on in the name and for the advantage of religion, stands perhaps unrivalled in the

* I say *suffered*, because it does not appear that the prostitutes, in the temple of this Assyrian Venus, were trained by the priests to ruin: the whole account, however, is in other respects too similar. I do not choose to insert the scandalous particulars, but the reader may find them in Herodotus, lib. i. p. 62.

history

history of the world and the annals of infamy. It was by degrees that the Eleusinian worship arrived at the point of enormity above-recited, and the obscenities, finally prevalent, were equally regretted and disclaimed by the institutors; but, in India, we see an avowed plan of shameless seduction and debauchery; the priest himself converted into a base procurer, and the pagoda into a public brothel. The devout Mahomedan traveller, whose journey to India, in the ninth century, has been published by M. Renaudot, and from which account this description is partly taken, concludes the article by a solemn thanksgiving to the Almighty, that *he* and *his* nation were delivered from the errors of infidelity, and were unstained by the enormities of so criminal a devotion!*

Nothing can be conceived more solemn than the rites of initiation into the greater mysteries, as described by Apuleius and Dion Chrysostome, who had both gone through the awful ceremony; nothing more tremendous and appalling than the scenery exhibited before the eyes of the terrified *aspirant*. After entering the grand vestibule of the mystic shrine,

* See Anciennes Rélations, p. 88, and Voyage de Tavernier, livre i. chap. v. beginning at 'Cette pagode est remplie de quantité de nudités,' &c.

he was led by the hierophant, amidst surrounding darkness and incumbent horrors, through all those extended ailes, winding avenues, and gloomy adyta, mentioned above as equally belonging to the mystic temples of Egypt, Eleusis, and India. I have asserted before, that the Metempsychosis was one of the leading *principia* taught in those temples, and this first stage was intended to represent the toilsome wanderings of the benighted soul through the mazes of vice and error before initiation; or, in the words of an antient writer quoted by Warburton from Stobæus: "It was a rude and fearful march through night and darkness."* Presently the ground began to rock beneath his feet, the whole temple trembled, and strange and dreadful voices were heard through the midnight silence. To these succeeded other louder and more terrific noises, resembling thunder; while quick and vivid flashes of lightning darted through the cavern, displaying to his view many ghastly sights and hideous spectres. emblematical of the various vices, diseases, infirmities, and calamities, incident in that state of terrestrial bondage from which his struggling soul was now going to emerge, as well as of the horrors and penal

* See Divine Legation, vol. i. p. 235.

torments

torments of the guilty in a future state. At this period, all the pageants of vulgar idolatry, all the train of gods, supernal and infernal, passed in awful succession before him, and a hymn, called the *Theology of Idols*, recounting the genealogy and functions of each, was sung: afterwards, the whole fabulous detail was solemnly recanted by the mystagogue; a divine hymn in honour of ETERNAL AND IMMUTABLE TRUTH was chaunted, and the profounder mysteries commenced. "And now, arrived on the *verge* of *death* and *initiation*, every thing wears a dreadful aspect; it is all horror, trembling, and astonishment." An icy chilliness seises his limbs; a copious dew, like the damp of real death, bathes his temples; he staggers, and his faculties begin to fail; when the scene is of a sudden changed, and the doors of the interior and splendidly-illumined temple are thrown wide open. A "miraculous and divine light discloses itself; and shining plains and flowery meadows open on all hands before him." *Accessi confinium mortis*, says Apuleius,* *et calcato Proserpinæ limine, per omnia vectus elementa remeavi; nocte medio vidi* SOLEM *candido coruscantem lumine:*

* Apuleii Metamorphosis. lib. ii. v. i. p. 273. Edit. novissima, ad optimas editiones collata, studiis Societatis Bipontinæ, 1788.

—Arrived at the bourn of mortality, after having trod the gloomy threshold of Proserpine, I passed rapidly through all the surrounding elements; and, at deep midnight, beheld the sun shining in meridian splendour. The clouds of mental error and the shades of real darkness being now alike dissipated, both the soul and the body of the initiated experienced a delightful vicissitude; and, while the latter, purified with lustrations, bounded in a blaze of glory, the former dissolved in a tide of overwhelming transport. Those few authors of the antient world, who have written on this subject, and who have dared to unfold to posterity the awful and deep secrets into which they were initiated, speak of them exactly as the Brahmins do of the divine raptures of *absorption* in the Deity.

At that period of virtuous and triumphant exultation, according to the divine Plato, (the VYASA of Greece,) "they saw celestial beauty in all the dazzling radiance of its perfection, when, joining with the glorified chorus, they were admitted to the μακαρίαν ὄψιν, or *beatific vision*, and were initiated into the most blessed of all mysteries."*

* Καλλος δε τοτε ην ιδειν λαμπρον, &c. Platonis Phæd. p. 1224. Ficini edit. Francfort, 1602.

I shall conclude this prolonged account of the ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES with mentioning a few particulars, which, added to what has been already said, will, I conceive, leave little doubt remaining in the mind of the reader concerning the real and original country in which they were first instituted; unless indeed he should be inclined to believe so improbable a circumstance, as that the haughty and self-sufficient Brahmin migh thave borrowed, from the remote region of Greece, the most sacred and indispensible rituals of his religion. Of those various, tedious, and complex, ceremonies, as well as of the exact and severe discipline which thc Brahmin is compelled to toil through in the several stages of the CHAR ASHERUM, or *four Hindoo degrees*, I shall treat amply in a future chapter; but it will be peculiarly illustrative of the present subject, to describe, in this place, the ablutions necessary to be performed by the BRAHMACHAREE, or Brahmin of the first degree. They are thus, *verbatim et literatim*, related in the Ayeen Akbery.* "The Brahmin bathes every morning before sun-rise. He begins his ablution with taking up in his right hand a little water, and says, Pardon my offences!

* Ayeen Akbery, vol. iii. p. 217.

After this, he throws away the water; then he rubs himself all over with earth; and, if he be in a river, dives three times, or else he throws water thrice over his body, and rubs himself with his hands. Next, he repeats the name of GOD, and afterwards thrice takes up in his right hand a little water, which he sips, and repeats certain prayers, during all which time he sprinkles water upon his head. Then, with his fore-finger and thumb, he stops his nostrils, and, bowing down his face to the surface of the water, repeats another prayer, and then plunges again, or throws water over himself thrice. He then sprinkles *seven* times his forehead, breast, and shoulders: after this, joining his open hands, he fills them *eight* times with water, and throws it towards the sun, reciting a particular prayer. He then sips the water, and finally repeats the PARAYENAM." This, adds Abul Fazil, they call the ablution; and a very ample ablution the reader will, doubtless, esteem it. Let us now inquire what was the introductory rite of initiation practised at Eleusis. The very first and most important ceremony in the lesser mysteries was the purification of the body BY WATER, intended to inculcate the necessity of a similiar purification of the soul from the impure adhesions of vicious passions and propensities;

pensities; and it is remarkable that the officer assisting upon that solemn occasion was called Ὑδρανος, from ὑδωρ, *water*. The same ceremony of ablution was repeated on the initiation into the greater mysteries: for, according to Meursius, whose account I do not possess, but whom Archbishop Potter,* in his extended account of this festival, has sedulously followed, at the very entrance of the grand mystic temple the aspirant washed his hands in consecrated water: and Apuleius, who had been initiated, expressly says,† Septies *submerso fluctibus capite, quod eum numerum principivè religione aptissimum divinus ille Pythagoras prodidit.* The very mention of Pythagoras, who is recorded in the Hindoo annals to have visited India by this author, and his specifying the particular number *seven*, are two of the strongest testimonies that can be adduced in proof of the truth of the preceding remark.

The reader will not, perhaps, be displeased to pause with me for one moment; and, while he considers the number and variety of these ablutions, but especially the endless repetition

* See Potter's Grecian Antiq. vol. ii. p. 390, edit. oct.

† Apuleii Metamorph. vol. i. p. 254, edit. Bipont. 1828.

of those of the Brahmin, he will ask, for what important cause was this tedious round of ablutions prescribed him? He will demand, in memorial of WHAT GRAND EVENT were these eternal bathings in rivers and tanks ordained? If it should be answered, they were intended as a memento of internal purity, and an incitement to preserve unspotted virtue amidst abounding vice; or, if they should be affirmed to have sprung from a laudable intention in the great legislator to promote external health and vigour of constitution in a dangerous and enervating climate; he will probably allow, in the institution, much solid wisdom and piety, and, in the practice, much substantial benefit. But I will venture to affirm, that, independently of those momentous considerations, two other events, the most interesting and the most important in the annals of mankind, are meant to be shadowed out, and the memory of them, by these rites, indelibly impressed and kept alive in the breast of the devotee: I mean, the CREATION of the WORLD, when Brahma or the spirit of God floated, in his lotos-bed, upon the waters of the Chaos; and the destruction of that world by a GENERAL DELUGE.

Having made this subject, as well as the not less involved one of their wild chronology,

nology, objects of particular and of laborious investigation, I have the happiness to acquaint the reader, that a considerable part of the first volume of the History of Hindostan is devoted to the elucidation of those points. I may take the liberty to add, without indulging an improper vanity, that, though it be far from wanting that additional support, the grand fabric of the Mosaic theology, so far from being shaken to its foundations by those Indian chimæras, that have so widely gone forth into the world and have been propagated with such indecent zeal by some writers of a sceptical class, will, in the result of the investigation, obtain a new column of adamant to uphold and adorn it. In fact, every fresh attack upon that majestic fabric tends only the more to prove its IMPREGNABLE SOLIDITY, and cover its enemies with FRESH CONFUSION. Upon the present subject, I ought not to omit doing justice to one of the greatest scholars and the most ingenious men of the present age, who has suggested the NOVEL, the PIOUS, and the FORCIBLE, remark, that the real foundation of all the mysteries celebrated in every country, from the period of their supposed commencement in Egypt to that of their final extinction at Rome in the præfecture of Gracchus, was a

pious and grateful attempt of the first post-diluvian ages to commemorate the miraculous escape, under Divine Providence, of their immediate ancestors from the jaws of a watery grave, and their preservation in the ark, fabricated by the direction of God. I shall take the liberty of transcribing a passage or two from the second volume of the Analysis of Antient Mythology, in illustration of the author's hypothesis. After asserting, that all the mysterious rites of the Gentile world appear to have been memorials of the deluge and of the events which immediately succeeded, Mr Bryant adds, "Those mysteries, for the most part, consisted of a melancholy process; and were celebrated, by night, with torches, in commemoration of the state of darkness in which the great patriarch and his family had been involved."* In another place he takes notice, that "there was scarcely any circumstance, however minute, mentioned by Moses concerning the ARK and NOAH, but what was recorded in the family of Ham. It is said of the patriarch, that he was a man of the earth, and skilled in planting and sowing, and every species of agriculture. When he constructed the ark, he made a window in it; through

* See Bryant's Analysis, vol. ii. p. 331, 332, 333.

which,

which, after a season, he looked forth and saw the ruins of the former world. He made also a DOOR in the ark; which was a circumstance continually commemorated by the Gentile writers. The entrance, through it, they esteemed a passage to death and darkness; but the egress from it was represented as a return to life. And, as the residence in the ark was an intermediate state between a lost world and a world renewed, this was constantly alluded to in their symbolical representations."* The reader will observe that the ingenious analyst, throughout his instructive work, supposes Noah to be the genuine Osiris. He informs us, that, as the principal rites in Egypt were confessedly for a person lost and consigned for a time to darkness, but who, after much bewailing and anxious search, was at length found, and supposed to be restored to life, no allusion could possibly point more directly than this to the previous disappearance of the patriarch, to the perils and gloom with which he might well be supposed to be surrounded in the ark, and his consequent emerging and final restoration to light and safety. He observes, that the emphatical expression of the μυςης, when purified, "I have

* Bryant's Analysis, vol. ii. p. 237.

escaped

escaped a sad calamity, and my lot is greatly mended;" and, at the feast of Isis, the exulting exclamation, Ευρηχαμεν, Συγχαιρομεν! *We have found the lost* OSIRIS, *let us rejoice together!* have also a decided reference to the same event; that among many other circumstances, corroborative of his position, not the least convincing is the very ceremony adopted, during the efforts of the priests to find the missing object of their research, that of a number of their body going down by night to the sea-shore, bearing a sacred scyphus, in which was a golden vessel in the form of a *ship* or *boat*, and into which they poured some of the water of the river; that, this being performed, the shout of tumultuous joy above-mentioned broke forth from the crowd, and that then Osiris was supposed to be found.* He winds up the whole of his argument, by proving, from Plutarch, that this ceremony of inclosing Osiris in his tomb, or ark, in memory of his having been in his life-time thus concealed to avoid the fury of Typhon, their known symbol of the ocean, took place precisely upon the seventeenth day of the second month, after the autumnal equinox; that is, in fact, upon the very day on which the TRUE OSIRIS en-

* Bryant's Analysis, vol. ii. p. 333, 334, 335.

tered

tered the ark, which, in Scripture, is said to have taken place in the six hundredth year of Noah's life; ON THE SECOND MONTH, AND ON THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF THAT MONTH.

The Eleusinian aspirant, after ablution, was clothed in a linen vestment, the emblem of purity, and, we are informed,* in the Indian register before-mentioned, that the Brahmin candidate, in the first stage of probation, was arrayed, "in a linen garment without suture." But the mystic temple itself, as described by Apuleius,† was *ædes amplissima*; according to Vitruvius, it was *immani magnitudine*; and, according to Strabo, it was capable of holding as large a number as a theatre.‡ If these several authors had intended to describe the pagodas of Salsette and Elephanta, could they have done it with more characteristic accuracy? temples, of which the former, according to M. Niebuhr, is a square of 120 feet, and in the latter of which, if we are rightly informed in the seventh volume of the Archæologia, the grand altar alone is elevated to the astonishing height of twenty-seven feet. The gloomy avenues surrounding them have

* Ayeen Akbery, vol. iii. p. 217.

† Apuleii Metamorph. vol. i. lib. ii. p. 271.

‡ Strabonis Geograph. lib. ix. p. 380, edit. Basil.

been

been also particularised; in which an overwhelming dread and horror seised the benighted wanderer; and with respect to the gaudy shows and splendid scenery occasionally displayed to the view of the initiated in their recesses; who, that beholds the superb decorations, the richly painted walls, and carved imagery, in the modern pagodas; who, that considers the beauty of the colours, and the ingenuity of the devices, conspicuous in many of the manufactures of India, whether in gold and silver enamel, in boxes curiously inlaid with ivory, in carpets of silk richly flowered, and linens stained with variegated dies; can possibly entertain a doubt of the ability of the antient Indians strikingly to pourtray, on canvas or otherwise, the allegorical visions, in which the genius of the nation takes so much delight; the amaranthine bowers, in which beatified spirits are supposed to reside, and the Elysian plains of EENDRA's voluptuous paradise?

The initiated in the Grecian temples, were crowned with myrtle, and the Persian priests of Mithra, and consequently those of India, (for the system was the same,) were invariably decked with a rich tiara, wound about with the same foliage. Thus arrayed, the arch-priest, according to Herodotus, *επαειδει θεογονιην*, sang the

the theogony, or ode reciting the origin of the gods. The hierophant, that is, the *revealer of sacred things* in the Eleusian mysteries, was arrayed in the habit and adorned with the symbols of the great Creator of the world. of whom, in those mysteries, he was supposed to be the substitute and revered as the emblem. He was attended in his sacred office by three assistant ministers, of whom the first was called Δαδȣχος, or the torch-bearer; he was intended to represent the SUN. The second was denominated Κηρυξ, or the herald; he was considered as the type of the planet MERCURY. The third was called 'Ο επι Βωμω, or the minister of the altar, and he was venerated as the symbol of the MOON. The same characteristic distinctions doubtless prevailed in those of India, where the Sun, Moon, and Mercury, under the name of Budha, for ever occur in the varied page of their mythology. There perhaps, as in the rites of Mithra in Persia, the chief gods attended in the assumed characters of the various constellations. Their physical theology, which led them, in various instances, to consider the Deity as an incarnate agent upon earth, would naturally lead them in those mysterious institutions to shadow out, under the person of the high presiding Brahmin, the supreme Creator

Creator of all things, and to decorate that sacred personage (the symbolical representation of Deity) after the manner of the Persian Mithra, with a loosely-floating tunic of a bright cerulean tincture, and spangled with innumerable stars. At the same time, their great attachment to astronomy would induce them to consider the priests, who officiated around him, as representing the planetary train moving in their several stations by his immediate command and influence, and clothed with brightness from the reflection of his own transcendent glory.

SECTION

SECTION VIII.

The wonderful Analogy, or rather the Identity, of the Indian and Greek mysterious Theology having, in the former Section, been fully shewn, it is the Author's Purpose in the present to inquire by what Channel the latter derived their Knowledge of the Indian Religion and Literature.—The Investigation commences with an Inquiry into the Æra of the Fabrication of the Caverns of India, and is pursued in a comprehensive Examination of the Arrangement and symbolical Ornaments of the Caverns of the Thebais, as represented by the best Writers and the latest Travellers.—Strong Features of Similitude every where apparent, as well in the Caverns, and their emblematical Sculptures, as in the mystical Theology, antiently prevailing in either Country, and which originally gave Existence to those Sculptures.—The Caverns, therefore, both of Egypt and India, fabricated by the antient Cuthite Colonies from Chaldæa, in the earliest Periods of the World, before human Habitations and sacred Edifices were erected.

erected.—The Result of the Inquiry stated to be, that the Greeks obtained their Knowledge of the mysterious Rites of Asia, through the Medium of Egypt, at that remote Period in which their Philosophers visited the Sages of Egypt in the Caverns of the THEBAIS.

THE nature of the mysterious rites and sciences, antiently celebrated and taught in the caverns of ELEPHANTA and SALSETTE, has been extensively explained. The æra of the fabrication of those caverns is a point which cannot be settled with equal exactness; though it is probable that certain SANSCREET inscriptions, discovered on the walls of the former and accurately engraved, but not explained, by M. Anquetil, may contain the desired information. An exact copy of them, we are informed, is now in the possession of the Asiatic Society, of which we may expect to see as correct a version in some future volume, and consequently this obscure point elucidated. The taste for hieroglyphic ornaments, displayed through those recesses in every part of India, (for those at Elora are still more numerous and surprising,) has inclined some writers to think them the workmanship of Egyptian artists, and the idea apparently derives force from a tradition prevalent

lent in these parts, and mentioned by Niebuhr, "that there came thither a certain foreign people, who, in one night, hewed all the figures in the rock, and went away the ensuing morning." Indeed, when we reflect that the antient Egyptians, under the name of Osiris,* paid adoration to the sun with fervour little inferior to that of the Persians; that in their hieroglyphics, according to the representation of Macrobius, they pourtrayed that divinity under the symbol of a *sceptre and an eye*, the eye that surveyed and the sceptre that commanded all things; and that the whole mountainous region of Upper Egypt, bordering upon the Nile, was crowded with subterraneous grottoes and caverns, abounding with astonishing hieroglyphic sculptures, so similar to those in India, that skilful examiners have thought they discovered among the Thebaic a great part of the Brahmin mythology; we are filled with equal astonishment and perplexity.

On this disputable point let us first attend to Mr Norden, a traveller, whose pencil was as accurate in delineating as his pen was correct in describing the antiquities of Egypt. If the

* The Lexicon of Jablonski gives a new derivation of the word Osiris, which is there deduced from Osh Iri, that is, *He who makes time.*

Hindoos, according to the assertion of Ovington, absurdly assign to a gigantic progeny, whom they thought alone adequate to the achievement of such stupendous works, the fabrication of these caverns; so, in like manner, the Egyptians, Mr Norden acquaints us, attribute the prodigious excavations with which the Thebais abounds to a similar origin, "There reigns, among the people who, at present, inhabit Egypt, a tradition, that there were antiently in the country GIANTS, who raised, without much difficulty, the pyramids, the vast palaces, and the temples (external or subterraneous) which we have been just describing."* Although the idea of their being fabricated by giants hardly deserved a serious consideration, yet this ingenious traveller has taken an opportunity, from the measure of the entrances into the caves, the dimensions of the gates of the erected temples, and those of the sarcophagus remaining to this day in the largest of the pyramids, of demonstrating what might otherwise with some shadow of reason have been doubted, that the inhabitants of Egypt, in those most remote periods, differed not in size from the present race of men.

* See Norden's Travels in Egypt and Nubia, vol. i. p. 111, of the 8vo. edit. by Dr Templeman. Lond. 1757.

These

These circumstances he mentions as incontestable proofs, that the human race have not degenerated in stature: "for the sarcophagus," he observes, "determines the size of the body of the monarch for whom the pyramid was erected: and the passages of that pyramid evince, that the workmen have not been of a larger size than the prince, since the entrance and the egress scarcely afford sufficient room for men of moderate stature, such as they have at present."

Our learned countryman, that profound geometrician and astronomer, Mr Greaves, who had visited those pyramids previously to Mr Norden, and obliged the public with a description of them and their contents mathematically correct, corroborates his opinion on this point. He describes the internal dimensions of the sarcophagus as somewhat exceeding six feet in length, and not quite three feet in depth and breadth. "A narrow space," he adds, "yet large enough to contain a most potent and dreadful monarch when dead, for whom, when living, all Egypt was too strait and narrow a circuit. By these dimensions, and by such other observations as have been made by me, from several embalmed bodies in Egypt, we may conclude that there is no decay in human nature; (though the question is

as old as Homer!) but that the men of this age are of the same stature of which they were three thousand years ago, notwithstanding St Angustin and others are of a different opinion."*

The Brahmins also contend that the stature, as well as the age, of man is gradually decreasing; so that, as I have had occasion elsewhere to remark,† from Mr Holwell, towards the close of the CALLEE YUG, or present grand period of the world's duration, his stature shall be so reduced, "that he will not be able to pluck a BERENGELAH, or the *egg-plant*, without the assistance of a hooked stick." The fact is, that these prodigies of remote antiquity, raised in the mind an admiration and an awe, which mounted into a species of idolatrous veneration for the original fabricators; and, while they beheld such amazing proofs of the grandeur of their minds, they thought they could do no less than accommodate them with a form in some degree proportioned to the magnitude of their intellectual powers.

* See Mr Greaves's Pyramidographia, in the first volume of his works, edited by Dr Birch, p. 131, 8vo. Lond. 1737.

† On the Indian Cosmogony, in the first volume of the History itself.

Mr

Mr Norden's seventh plate, equally beautiful as the others, exhibits a view of the grottoes of the great TSCHABEL ESSELSELE, or *chained mountain*; and I could wish to have presented my subscribers with an engraving of that mountain, together with a view of the Canarah Rock, since they both soar alike into the air, with a kind of wild grandeur, sufficient to awe the mind of the savage into veneration, in the same plate; but I have already gone beyond my intended limits in the expensive article of engravings, and they will therefore rest contented with his verbal description of them.

After giving an account of the *chained mountain* itself, so called from a boom or chain which formerly extended across the Nile, from its basis to a rock on the opposite shore, and barred the passage this way to an invading enemy, he proceeds to describe the adjoining grottoes, "which are numerous, having their sides entirely covered with the MOST BEAUTIFUL HIEROGLYPHICS." The light, entering only by the outlet of each grotto, was scarcely sufficient to distinguish the various objects, but at length our traveller perceived an opening at the top, and began to make his sketch. Being shortly after interrupted in this work by the Arabians assembling in multitudes, he was only able to delineate "four figures in high

relief sitting, and in their natural size, two of them male and two of them female. The men, who are in the middle, have their arms folded across the breast, (an attitude very common in the Indian caverns,) and each woman takes hold of a man under the arm."*
Mr Norden, however, took a less hasty survey of the famous grottoes denominated SABABI-NATH, a name which *possibly* they may have derived from the species of Sabian superstition antiently practised in them. They are situated in the mountains bordering on the shore of the river Nile, called TSCHEBAT ELL KOFFERI; and the traveller must ascend that mountain for two or three hours before he can arrive at the first gate. "Through this gate you enter into a large saloon, supported by hexagonal pillars, contrived in the rock itself. The roofs are adorned with paintings, which even at present we distinguish extremely well; while the gold, with which they were originally decorated, glitters on all sides. Here and there we perceive openings, which lead to other apartments; but, as they are filled with rubbish, and as the passages into them are embarrassed with it, few travellers choose to venture themselves there. Above, there is another apart-

* [illegible] vol. i. p. 49.

ment,

ment, to which you may with difficulty arrive, by climbing up on the outside of the mountain. It is not so extensive a saloon as the former; but it is painted after a similar manner, and, like it, communicates with other adjoining apartments."*

Mr Greaves, in describing the pyramid second in magnitude, expresses his astonishment that no traveller before him had particularly noticed two very stately and elaborate pieces of cavern-architecture, by which that pyramid is bounded on the north and west sides. The following description of these rocky apartments, by that traveller, deserves particular notice, not because the style in which they are excavated at all resembles that of Elephanta, but because they bear a very striking similitude to the convents of the Talapoins, or priests of BOODH, described by Father Loubère, in his account of the kingdom of Siam, whither, in 1687, he went as ambassador from the king of France. There can be little doubt but that the superstition of BOODH, who, we shall presently see, is no other than the SOMMONACODOM, or stupendous stone deity of the Siamese, came originally from Egypt, — from that country where rocks and stones, hewn

* Norden's Egypt, vol. ii. p. 35.

into a thousand fanciful forms, first received the adoration of mankind; from the neighbourhood of those lofty pyramids, the emblem of the SOLAR DEITY, and that colossal Sphynx, the symbol of the SUN in Leo and Virgo, which, majestic even in ruins, still strike with awe the astonished spectator. The period of his arrival, however, on the shores of India, is involved in the profoundest obscurity, and the greatest scholars of Asia have exerted upon that point, with various success, their critical sagacity. I shall presently state in brief what their several opinions are, reserving, for a particular period of the ensuing history, the full investigation of that perplexing event. For the present I shall only make one observation, as prefatory to the remarks immediately following, that, according to Loubère, their astronomers have fixed the death of Sommonacodom to the year before Christ, 545; and remind the reader, that the date of the invasion of Egypt, by Cambyses, is fixed by Usher to be in the year 525 preceding, A peculiar conjunction of the planets, Loubère informs us, about that period took place, when their first grand astronomical epocha commenced: all which circumstances, if the intelligence can be depended on, tend strongly to evince of what material use astronomy is towards

towards rectifying the errors of chronology and fixing the doubtful events of history. About thirty-feet in depth, says Mr Greaves, and more than one thousand and four hundred feet in length, have these apartments been hewn out of the hard rock in a perpendicular line, and squared by the chissel, as he supposes, to serve as lodgings for the priests of the stupendous temple adjoining, This opinion of Mr Greaves, I must observe, remarkably corroborates Mr Bryant's judicious conjecture, that those amazing fabrics were not *solely* intended for sepulchres, but for observatories and temples in which were celebrated the gloomy superstitious rites of the progeny of Cush.* Mr Greaves proceeds to observe, that these caverns range along at a convenient distance, parallel to the two sides above-mentioned of this pyramid, "meeting at a right angle, and making a very fair and graceful prospect." The entrance into them is by square openings, hewn out of the rock, not exceeding in magnitude those which he had described before as forming the entrance of the first pyramid, and which he had represented as narrow and quadrangular. The

* See Mr Bryant's Analysis of Antient Mythology, vol. iii. p. 580.

chambers

chambers within, he observes, are likewise of a square form and well-proportioned, covered and arched above with the natural rock; in most of which there was a passage opening into an interior chamber, but so obstructed with rubbish, and so involved in darkness, as to forbid all penetration into their recesses. These chambers, it can scarcely be doubted, had some secret communication with the interior apartments of this pyramid, the entrance into which has, if ever known, been long since forgotten. M. De la Loubère, among many interesting and curious particulars relative to the religious sentiments and public rites of the Talapoins, informs us, that this order of Siamese priests reside in convents, which consist of many little cells, ranged within a large square inclosure. In the middle of this inclosure stands the temple. He then adds: "Certain PYRAMIDS stand near and quite round the temple, which are all inclosed within four walls."* PYRAMIDS and OBELISKS form a distinguishing feature in the Egyptian architecture. The whole country was covered with the former; and the reader, by casting his eye on the engraving, which

* See La Loubère's Hist. of Siam. in Harris's Collection of Voyages, voi. ii. p. 482.

represents

represents the august remains of the temple of Luxore, in the Thebais, will observe, that the attachment of the Egyptians to the latter symbol was not less remarkable. In that plate he will see two OBELISKS of astonishing height and magnitude; and since, wheresoever the Egyptians extended their influence, this particular mode of symbolizing the Deity seems very generally to have prevailed, a forcible argument may thence be deduced, that it *originated* among a people so notoriously devoted to hieroglyphic worship.

Thebes was at once the consecrated and the classic ground of Upper Egypt. There Science and Genius exhausted all their powers in the fabrication of that august temple to the Deity, of which one of the eight supurb portals is exhibited to the reader in a portion of this work: stupendous monument of the piety of that nation, scarcely injured amidst the vicissitudes of the elements and the revolution of three thousand suns! The subterraneous recesses in this province, as described by the great traveller Pocock, are so prodigious, that they impress the mind with scarcely less astonishment and admiration than the exterior edifices. They are called, in the language of the country, BAB-EL-MELUKE, that is, the gate or court of the kings; and

though,

though, in the latter periods of the empire, used as sepulchres for the sovereigns of Thebes, it is highly probable that they were antiently the residence of the living. Indeed, our traveller himself expresses a similar belief, when he describes his entrance among them as into "a sort of street, on each side of which the rocky ground, about ten feet high, has rooms cut into it, some of them being supported with pillars; and, as there is not the least sign in the plain of private buildings, I thought that these, in the very earliest times, might serve as houses, be the first invention after tents, and contrived as a better shelter from wind and the cold of the nights."* Both Diodorus Siculus † and Strabo ‡ mention these excavations as prodigies of human labour, amounting in number to above forty; of which number, however, the entrance into only seventeen could be discovered by Pocock, and no more than nine could be penetrated. Of these he has presented his readers with plans, of which, as they greatly illustrate every description of this kind, I lamented the

* Pococks's Description of the East, vol. i. p. 97, folio. Lond. 1743.

† Diod. Sic. lib, i. p. 43.

‡ Strabonis Geograph. lib. xvii. p. 816.

want

want in describing the Indian caverns. His verbal account of them is, however, very clear and intelligible, and I shall therefore insert it in this place,

"The hills on each side of the plain are high steep rocks, and the whole place is covered with rough stones, that seem to have rolled down from them. The grottoes are cut into the rock, in a most beautiful manner, in long rooms, or galleries, under the mountains, which are of a close white free-stone, that cuts like chalk, and is as smooth as the finest stucco-work." This description cannot fail of bringing to the mind of the reader the account, in a preceding page, of the stories or galleries cut in the rock of Canarah, so greatly resembling human habitations, as to have obtained for them the denomination of the city of Canarah. I ought likewise to have before stated the very probable supposition of Mr Hunter, that, however since hardened by time and weather, these excavations were probably made when the rock was in a softer state, and cut like the chalky free-stone here mentioned by Pocock. He proceeds thus in his interesting narration: "These galleries are for the most part about ten feet in height and width; four or five of them, one within the other, from thirty to fifty feet long and from ten

ten to fifteen feet high, generally lead to a spacious room, in which is seen the tomb of the king, with his figure cut in relief on the lid. In the furthermost room of another, the picture of the king is painted on the stone, at full length; both the sides and the cielings of the chambers are sculptured with hieroglyphics of birds and beasts, and some of them painted, remaining as fresh as if they were but just finished, though of such remote antiquity. The sepulchre marked A (in his plate) is most beautifully adorned with hieroglyhics cut into the stone and painted. Over the door the beetle is cut in a circle, and there is a human figure sitting on each side. The galleries within have hieroglyphics sculptured on each side, first in a sort of compartment next to the cieling, in a manner of a freeze; lower, figures are cut out, representing mummies; below these, for seven feet from the ground, are hieroglyphics all down the sides, divided by lines into different columns. In the middle of the cieling there are figures of men for about three feet in breadth, with STARS on each side. Among the hieroglyphics I observed many GOATS heads."* On this relation I must request permission to observe, that, as it seems

* Poocck's Travels, vol. i. p. 99.

absurd

absurd to place *human* beings among the stars, the beings, thus delineated on the cieling, must be of celestial origin, like those groups of GENII and DEWTAHS who are pourtrayed on the walls of the Indian caverns; and, with respect to the goats heads, it will be remembered, that the goat was an animal sacred to PAN, who, I have already observed, was particularly worshipped in a city of the Thebais, called, from that city, PANOPOLIS, the modern AKMIN.

Having occasion to mention this celebrated city, I cannot resist the opportunity of bringing, from this authentic writer, a very convincing proof of what I have recently remarked, that the temples of Egypt were adorned with astronomical symbols, in the same manner as the subterraneous Indian caverns were. This assertion the following curious passage strikingly corroborates. Wandering over the extensive ruins of PANOPOLIS, the attention of Dr Pocock was attracted by a stone of stupendous dimensions, one of those that probably once adorned the top of the magnificent temple of that deity, but half-buried in the ground. The part of this massy fragment, which protruded from the hill of ruins amidst which it was involved, was eighteen feet in length, and on one side of it

was

was "a very extraordinary sculpture, which had been painted, and from which I concluded that it was a temple dedicated to the SUN. Within some ornaments there are four circles; in the inner circle there is a figure, probably representing the SUN; the spaces between the two next are divided into twelve parts; in the first, twelve birds are cut in like seals; in the next, twelve figures defaced; which I conjectured might be the TWELVE SIGNS OF THE ZODIAC. The outer circle, not divided, has in it figures of men, if I mistake not, to the same number. In each angle, between the outer circle and the square ornaments that are around it, is a figure which may possibly represent the four seasons. A wing extends along one side of it, from a sort of globe, marked out in lines, which probably had another wing extending in the same manner, it may be, over such another sculpture. The stones, and some others of a temple near, are so large, that they cannot move them; nor do they use stones in building, but" (who can read the relation, without the most poignant indignation!) "they break in pieces these fine morsals of antiquity, adorned with hieroglyphics, and make lime of them. The entrance of this temple seems to have been to the SOUTH, as that of the other was, probably,

bably, to the NORTH. Most of it is white stone, mixed with pebbles, and adorned with hieroglyphics: one of them has STARS cut on it, which without doubt covered part of the building,"* But I must return from the *temples* to the *caverns* of Thebes. I must re-visit those gloomy sepulchres of her departed monarchs, which, probably, in the earliest periods of the world, were the residence of the ancestors of the human race. Let us once more, with silent step and with reverential awe, explore the hallowed depositories of royal dust!

Pursuing his lonely journey through those subterraneous departments, our author found one, in which was the sarcophagus of a king, adorned with hieroglyphics in different columns, with figures of men, hawks, and bulls. The human figures were probably of the same nature with the beings above-mentioned; and the hawk, or IBIS, is the known symbol of ISIS, as the bull, or APIS, was of OSIRIS. In another was sculptured a figure with its arms folded across the breast; over it a GLOBE, and a man kneeling on each side. Dr Pocock's description of these sepulchral grottoes concludes with an account of one of uncommon magnitude, in which, says he, "is a statue of a man with a sceptre in his hand,

* Pocock's Travels, vol. i. p. 78.

and on the cieling is a large figure of another man painted at top, with a particular sort of sceptre in his hand, and wings hanging down lower than his feet," (from this description, probably HERMES,) "and covering the whole body; this is a very extraordinary figure, and the painting exceedingly fresh. At the entrance on each side are four men, cut into the stone, above the natural size, having heads of hawks and other animals: on the inside, a tortoise and a man with a goat's head are cut within a circle on each of the pilasters. At the entrance of K, a large bull's head is cut in relief, &c." The tortoise, the TESTUDO of the celestial sphere, is the Hindoo symbol of strength; upon which account Veeshnu, in the second or BARA AVATAR, assumes that form to support the globe sinking in the bed of the ocean. The head, and part of the body, of an immense BULL, we have observed, issues from the centre of the great pagoda of Jaggernaut; and that the rock, through which the Ganges rushes into Hindostan, is called the COW-HEAD ROCK. It is readily granted, that to whatsoever purpose they were *originally* devoted, these particular caverns were indubitably afterwards converted into sepulchres; which circumstance might possibly lead Mr Ovington into the error of asserting that the Indian

Indian caverns likewise were burying-places. Two other caverns, however, of very ample dimensions, which he visited the following day, were certainly not dormitories for the dead, but habitations of the living, or sacred recesses for the performance of the most aweful rites of religion. To the first of these he descended by a flight of ten steps, cut in the rock, which led to a room in which are square pillars, likewise hewn out of the solid rock. "Beyond that, there is a long room with pillars ranging on each side: all the apartments are in like manner adorned with hieroglyphics; but the stone is scaled in such a manner, and is so black in some of the first apartments, that there is great reason to think the place has been damaged by fire. Beyond these rooms, the apartments extend to the right, there being several steps descending downwards: one part leads to a gallery, cut round the rock, which has some apartments on one side. In these, as well as in the apartments of the other grotto, marked B, are cavities cut perpendicular down to other chambers below, where I saw doors and openings, and where, probably, there are as many apartments above. One would almost imagine that those places were habitations for the living, and possibly might be cut under the palaces of the kings

 of

of Thebes, if they were not the palaces themselves." Of the second of these extensive caverns, marked B, in his plate, Dr Pocock has given no particular description; but, if we may judge from the plate which exhibits the plan upon which it was formed, it was fabricated of dimensions and hewn with toil not less astonishing.

Before I conclude the account of the Egyptian caverns by this celebrated traveller, the reader may possibly not be displeased if I state here, from the page immediately following that account, the dimensions of a vast colossal statue, which he discovered in some ruins adjoining to the grottoes just described and accurately measured. It will rescue from the suspicion of hyperbole the account given by me, from Niebuhr, of the dimensions of the grand bust in the Elephanta cavern, the centre face of which, he will recollect, alone measured, in length, five feet; that of the same face the nose measured one foot and a half; that the width, from the ear only to the middle of the nose, was three feet four inches; and that the stupendous breadth of the whole figure, between the shoulders, was near twenty feet.

"This large colossal statue," says Dr Pocock, "is broken about the middle of the trunk;

trunk: the head is six feet broad: from the top of the head to the bottom of the neck it measures eleven feet, and so it does from the bottom of the neck to the navel. It is twenty-one feet broad at the shoulders, the ear is three feet long and one foot four inches broad, and the foot is four feet eight inches broad." In another court of this ruined temple he saw the remains of "two statues of black granite: that to the west, which is in a sitting posture, measured, from the hands only to the elbow, five feet; and thence to the shoulder four feet. The statue, on the east, is three feet five inches long in the foot: lying at a distance from it was the head, with the cap: it is three feet six inches long; and the ear is one foot in length."* If admiration should be excited in the mind of the reader, on perusing the account of the dimensions of these statues, to what an exalted point will his astonishment be elevated, when he casts his eye upon the subsequent page, descriptive of the celebrated statue of MEMNON, standing upon a pedestal, which is alone above thirty feet in height and in width near twenty feet! I need not acquaint the classical reader that this is the famous statue erected in the

* Pocock's Description of the East, vol. i. p. 101.

temple of SERAPIS, which is affirmed, on the first appulse of the beam of the orient sun to have emitted a distinctly-audible sound. It is represensed, by Dr Pocock, as composed of a particular sort of porous dark granite, such as he never saw before, and much resembling the eagle-stone. The statue itself is broken; but of the whole amazing mass, the fabrication of which one would think must have exhausted a quarry, some idea may be formed from the magnitude of the leg and foot, still remaining entire. Of these an engraving, entirely covered with the inscriptions of Greek and Roman travellers, who bore their attestation to its having sent forth such a sound on the rising of the sun, appears opposite to page 104 of his first volume; and he found the height of the leg, "from the bottom of the foot to the top of the knee, to be about nineteen feet; from the bottom of the foot to the ankle, two feet six inches; to the top of the instep, four feet; the foot itself being five feet broad, and the leg four feet in depth."* Stupendous as these mensurations must appear, even these appear comparatively small, when we consider what is related in Pliny concerning the wonderful SPHYNX; for, that writer

* Pocock, vol. i. p. 102.

affirms,

affirms, that the head was no less than one hundred and two feet in circumference; that the figure itself was sixty-two feet high from the belly to the crown of the head; and that its entire length was 143 feet. It ought to be remarked here, that Pocock, in his description of the Sphynx, has inaccurately cited Pliny, as stating the length of the figure to be only 113 feet; "whereas," says he, "my account makes it 130 feet, which are seventeen feet more than Pliny."* But the real number of feet mentioned in Pliny is 143, as stated above; and therefore his dimensions, which are probably more exact, are thirteen feet less than the number of feet assigned by the Roman naturalist. Of its antient altitude of sixty-three feet, only twenty-seven now remain above the surface; so that about thirty-six feet must be buried in the accumulated sand and gravel.

The reader has been just informed, that these statues are of hard black granite, as are almost all the antient statues of Egypt. This circumstance suggested to M. Volney, one of the most enlightened travellers that ever explored the East, the idea that the antient

* Plinii Nat. Hist. lib, xxxvi. c. 12, and p. 390, of my edition, by Aldus: and Pocock, vol. i. p. 46.

Egyptians, to whose genius, talents, and learning, posterity is so deeply indebted, were BLACKS likewise, since he thinks it was natural for them to choose that their statues should be composed of marble of the same colour with themselves. The idea first occurred to him, on a minute investigation of the sphynx; for, when he beheld her black complexion, and her features precisely those of a negro; and when he recollected, that Herodotus had long ago asserted his belief, "that the Colchi were a colony of Egyptians, because, like them, they had black skins and frizzled hair;" M. Volney immedrately concluded, that the antient Egyptians were real negroes, of the same species with all the natives of Africa. He has added to this suggestion many very ingenious and interesting reflections. He lays it down as a general rule, that the features of a nation are a kind of monument capable in many cases, of elucidating and ascertaining the testimony of history concerning the origin of nations.

I shall hereafter endeavour to profit by these judicious remarks of M. Volney; and, when my history shall have at length commenced, I shall apply this rule of discrimination to some of the most venerated statues of India. It is not a little remarkable, that, according to

Herodotus,

Herodotus, there were two Ethiopias; one in Africa, the other in Asia: and, if the Delta of Egypt was peopled by the Thebaic Ethiopians, it is, at least, possible, that the peninsula of India might have for its first inhabitants the Ethiopians of Asia. In addition to M. Volney's remarks on this subject, I must also be permitted to observe, that the antients really did, in fabricating their statues of men and objects, attend to the complexion, properties, or country to which they belonged. Mr Addison, in his travels, elegantly remarks, that he never saw any statue of SLEEP that was not of *black marble*; alluding, doubtless, to the night, which is appropriated to sleep. All the statues of the NILE, and in particular that fine one at present to be seen in the garden of the Vatican at Rome, are of black marble, emblematical of the colour of the Ethiopians, amidst whose lofty mountains that river has its source.

"Usqûe coloratis amnis devexus ab INDIS."

VIRG. Georg. 4.

This quotation from Virgil, concerning the Nile, is highly deserving of notice, because it affords additional evidence of what was asserted in the early pages of the Geographical Dissertation, that the name of INDIA was extended

by

by the antients to Ethiopia; and that, in fact, from their ignorance of the geography of the higher Asia, India and Ethiopia were sometimes considered as the same country. The reader will recollect, that one of the idols, in the pagoda of Jaggernaut, is described by Captain Hamilton as A HUGE BLACK STONE, OF A PYRAMIDAL FORM; and the SOMMONACODOM, being the representative of the Egyptian god and prophet BOODH among the Siamese, is of the same sable complexion. In the description from the Ayeen Akbery, inserted in a preceding page, of an immense temple erected to the sun by an antient rajah, the reader has been made acquainted, that in the front of the gate there stood a pillar of black stone, of an octagonal form, fifty cubits high: he will hereafter be informed, from Tavernier, that, in the pagoda of Benares, that traveller likewise observed a conspicuous idol of black stone; and that the statue of Creeshna, in his celebrated temple of MATHURA, is of black marble. It is very remarkable, that one of the principal ceremonies incumbent upon the priests of these stone deities, according to Tavernier, is to anoint them daily with odoriferous oils, a circumstance which immediately brings to our remembrance the similar practice of Jacob, who, after the famous vision of the celestial ladder,

ladder, recorded in Scripture, *took the stone which he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a* PILLAR, *and poured oil upon the top of it.* It is added, that *he called the name of that place* BETH-EL, that is, *the house of God*, as the patriarch himself explains the word; *for this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be called* GOD'S HOUSE. Gen. xxviii. 18. This passage evinces of how great antiquity is the custom of considering stones in a sacred light, as well as the anointing them with consecrated oil. From this conduct of Jacob and this Hebrew appellative, the learned Bochart, with great ingenuity and reason, insists that the name and veneration of the sacred stones, called BÆTYLI, so celebrated in all pagan antiquity, were derived.* These Bætyli were stones of a round form; they were supposed to be animated, by means of magical incantations, with a portion of the Deity; they were consulted, on accasions of great and pressing emergency, as a kind of divine oracles, and were suspended either round the neck, or on some other part of the body, of the enraptured devotee. Of these consecrated stones, some were dedicated to Jupiter and others to the SUN; but they were considered as in a more particular man-

* Vide Bocharti, Sacra Geograph. lib. i. p. 38.

ner

ner sacred to SATURN, who is fabled to have swallowed one of these stones in the place of Jupiter, when he was seised with the sanguinary furor of devouring his children. The fable proceeeds to affirm, that the god having found his mistake, and vomitted it up again, this stone was preserved near the temple of Delphi, where care was taken *to anoint it daily with oil*, and to cover it with wool that had grown on the days of the SATURNALIAN festival.* The above relation affords a very remarkable proof (and it is very far from being the only one of the kind which these volumes will exhibit) how closely the pagan world imitated, and how basely they perverted, the religious rites of the antient and venerable patriarchs. Thus, the setting up of a stone, by this holy person, in grateful memory of the celestial vision vouchsafed him from above, and as a monument of the divine goodness, which had so conspicuously guarded him in his journey, probably became the occasion of all the idolatry paid, in succeeding ages, to those shapeless masses of unhewn stone, of

* See Stephanus on the word Thaumasius, and also Pausanias, who more amply relates the story. The meaning of this curious fable seems to be, that Saturn, or Time, (as the word Chronos, elegantly called by Horace, *Tempus edax rerum*, signifies,) devours whatever he produces. His offspring are the revolving years.

which

which so many astonishing remains are scattered up and down the Asiatic, and, I may add, the European, world.

These idol-representations of Deity, it has been observed, were at first rugged and shapeless as the rock from which they were torn; and I am of opinion this argument may be fairly urged in favour of the high antiquity of many of those rude and formless blocks, both of wood and stone, that are at present honoured with adoration in the most venerated pagodas of Hindostan. As mankind themselves grew more polished, and as statuary improved, their deities were represented under forms less hideous and disgusting; and those forms were accommodated to the new notions of Deity which their earliest speculations in physics and their increasing knowledge of astronomy inspired. The massy unhewn stones soon shot up in graceful pyramids and lofty obelisks, after the model of the solar ray and the ascending flame. The pyramidal form, however, did not universally prevail. Some of those mighty masses were hewn into square columns, obtuse at the summit, whose four polished sides symbolised the four elements, or were carved to face the four cardinal points. The earth, says Eusebius, was represented by a cylindrical stone. The octagon black column,

lumn, mentioned in the preceding page, might possibly have been fabricated in allusion to ome similar notion deriving its birth from physics and astronomy. Even the form of the CROSS, as allusive to the four elements, was no unusual symbol in the pagan world; and indeed Tavernier, as we shall hereafter see, describes two of the principal pagodas of India, Benares and Mathura, as erected in the form of VAST CROSSES, of which each wing is equal in extent.

Let not the piety of the catholic Christian be offended at the preceding assertion, that the CROSS was one of the most usual symbols among the hieroglyphics of Egypt and India. Equally honoured in the Gentile and the Christian world, this emblem of universal nature, of that world to whose four quarters its diverging radii pointed, decorated the hands of most of the sculptured images in the former country; and, in the latter, stamped its form upon the most majestic of the shrines of their deities. It repeatedly occurs on the Pamphylian and other obelisks; and the antiquaries Kircher and Mountfaucon have both honoured it with particular notice. The CRUX ANSATA of Hermes is represented by the former as a most sublime hieroglyphic, as a most mysterious and powerful amulet, endowed with an astonishing virtue,

tue, and as exhibiting one of the most complete mathematical figures; "*habentem longitudinem atque latitudinem, et quatuor angulos rectos*; possessing at once both length and breadth, and having four right angles, at once allusive to the four cardinal points of the world and typical of the four elements. In pages 277, 279, 280, and 281, of the third volume of his Œdipus, are symbolical representations, copied from the Barberine obelisk, of the four elements; FIRE, designated by a figure of Osiris, as the ANIMA MUNDI, or soul of the world, with a hawk's head; the AIR, by a figure bearing on his head a cap adorned with an orb, and WINGS, the usual emblem of the AIR on Egyptian monuments; the EARTH, by that of ISIS, the great mother of all things, with a calathus on her head, containing ears of grain, a bunch of flowers, and the horns of a cow, all emblems, as well as the swelling bosom which the goddess displays, of fertility and plenty; and, lastly, WATER, typified by a statue bearing the head and face of the IBIS, a bird sacred to the Nile, and with the horns *lunæ sextilis*, of the MOON, which in the month of August was supposed to assist in causing the inundations of that river. All these figures, thus emblematical of the ELEMENTS, which are highly worthy a minute examination, bear the

the hallowed cross with its circular handle, by which they were collectively and strikingly represented. To the consideration of the same subject, Mountfaucon has also devoted a few interesting pages, which will hereafter claim our attention.

If M. Volney's argument, that the colour of the statue frequently denotes the descent and nation of the person sculptured, be allowed, I trust my own humble assertion, that the qualities and property of the object are often pointed out by the same means, will not be refused its weight, because it is founded on very antient and respectable authority. I shall briefly state that authority. Porphyry, cited by Eusebius, expressly says, that the antients represented the Deity by a black stone, because his nature is obscure and inscrutable by man.* The antient Arabians, who lived in a region of rock, according both to Suidas † and Strabo,‡ continued to a very late period to worship the image of their tutelary god Mars, erected at Petra under the figure of a square black stone; for *black*, say these authors, was thought a proper colour to veil the solemn mysteries of religion. The same rule seems to have been

* Euseb. de Præp. Evang. lib. iii. l. 3. p. 31, edit. Basil. 1542.

† Suidas in voce Deus Mars. ‡ Strabonis Geograph. lib. xvii.

observed

observed in statues fabricated of wood, in the formation of which the distinguishing attribute or function of the deity was generally attended to. Pausanias has enumerated the several kinds of wood made use of for this purpose. As the ebony, cypress, cedar, oak, yew, and box, trees. Thus, to the formation of those of Jupiter, the sovereign of gods and men, the oak, the monarch of the woods, was devoted. Hence the myrtle, sacred to Venus, composed the beautiful statue of the queen of love. The olive, a tree consecrated to science, of which whole groves adorned Athens, the seat of learning and philosophy, gladly submitted to the axe to form the statue of Minerva, the patron of the arts. Of the infernal deities, the funereal cypress and the baleful yew usually formed the gloomy and inauspicious images.

It is now high time to conclude this excursion to the caverns of the Thebais, and to state the result of the inquiry. It remains for me to shew, that the excursion itself was not entirely unnecessary; but, by producing some more particular proofs, as well as by a few striking and indisputable traits, to demonstrate that the mythology of the Hindoos and Egyptians had the same origin, and in reality, even at present, are not greatly dis-

similar. Many proofs of a general nature have been already adduced, and more still will be pointed out in the second section of this Dissertation; when, after having described the pagodas, I shall proceed more minutely to consider the theological rites now practised in them, and certain customs and maxims originating in the solemnities of religion, common to both nations. For the present I shall only remark, that there seems to have prevailed, in Egypt, a more antient mythology than we have as yet received any satisfactory account of; for, though the statues of the Nile and those in the Delta might be BLACK, possibly because fabricated by an Ethiopian race, yet we know, from Eusebius, whom I must quote at length in my account of the Indian cosmogony, that the great CNEPH, that most antient divinity of Egypt, was a being of a DARK BLUE complexion,* the colour of the heavenly region from which he descended. I must also remark, that though the Sommonacodom be a black stone, as representing Boodh, who came to India from a nation of blacks, and though Creeshna was so called from his black complexion, yet we have certain information, from Sir W. Jones, that the great statue

* Vide Eusebius de Præp. Evang. lib. iii. cap. 11.

of

of NARAYEN, or the Spirit of God, who at the beginning of time floated on the waters, as that statue is now to be seen elevated in the great reservoir of CATMANDU, the capital of Nepaul, is formed of BLUE MARBLE,* Cneph, therefore, and Narayen are evidently the same deity under two different appellations.

Eusebius, in his treatise recently cited, De Preparatione Evangelica, which is a wonderful mine of Oriental theological science, and contains many fragments of the more antient philosophers of Asia, now lost, asserts, from Horus-Apollo, that the old Egyptians symbolised the world by a BLUE serpent with YELLOW scales; that is, as Horus-Apollo himself explains it, the firmament spangled with stars. In a preceding quotation, from M. Sonnerat, on the Indian mythology, the reader must have observed ideas very consonant to this in the manner in which their painters designated the planet SANI, or Saturn, viz. as a divinity of a BLUE colour, invested with serpents in a circle; and, in fact, to Eusebius's account it may be added, that, in our editions of Horapollo, he himself describes this mundane serpent, the Agathodaimon of

* See Sir W. Jones in the Asiatic Researches, vol. i. p. 261.

 Egypt,

Egypt, as in a circular position; for, it is the serpent wreathed into a circle, by holding his tail in his mouth.* By this they probably meant to shadow out the rotundity of the world; or, since the serpent, thus sculptured, was, among the Egyptians, the common emblem of eternity, they might possibly intend to intimate the old atheistical doctrine of its eternal duration.

It has already been observed, in the Geographical Dissertation, that Sir W. Jones is inclined to derive the name of the river of Egypt from the Sanscreet word NILA, or *blue*; and he cites Dionysius, who expressly calls the Nile *an azure stream*, in corroboration of his opinion. Now it is exceedingly singular, that the Indus, in the early part of its course, should be also called the NILAB, from the *blue* cast of its waters. Indeed, one large branch of the Indus still bears that name; and, possibly, it was the similitude of their names which led Alexander into that enormous error, recorded in Arrian, of imagining, upon his arrival at the banks of the Indus, that he had

* Serpentem pingunt, says Horapollo, qui suam ipsius caudam rodat; variis insterstinctam squamis. Per squamas, quidem, STELLAS, quibus cælum, seu mundus distinctus est, obscure indicantes. Vide Hori-Apollonis Hieroglyphica, p. 8, edit. duodecimo, 1631.

discovered

discovered the sources of the Nile. But let us proceed to state some farther particulars, in which this similitude is still more directly and distinctly visible.

If Brahma, in the act of creation, be painted in the pagodas floating over the surface of the vast watery abyss, while he reclines upon the expanded leaf of the lotos; exactly in the same attitude, and recumbent upon the same sacred plant, does the figure of Osiris constantly occur on all the monuments of Egyptian antiquity. Instances of the latter deity, thus designated, may be seen by the inquisitive reader in Kircher, Kæmpfer, Mountfaucon, and in the curious and elaborate work of M. D'Ancarville, who has attempted, from a series of commemorative coins and medals, to give us a history of the earliest progress of the arts and the diffusion of superstitious rites throughout the antient world. In the first volume also of this history, I shall be happy to present the reader with engravings of some of the more remarkable representations on antient Egyptian and Phænician coins and sculptures; particularly of OSIRIS UPON THE LOTOS, THE SERPENT-WORSHIP, and THE MUNDANE EGG; all of which notions were as familiar to the antient Hindoo sages as ever they were to the

Egyptian, Persian, and Greek, philosophers; and, as appears to me, at a period far more remote than, from any remaining annals of these latter nations, it can be proved they flourished among them. These plates, however expensive they may prove to the author, will prove of infinite use towards illustrating the comparative description, which it is my intention to exhibit, of the Oriental cosmogonies, and will, in particular, throw great light on the antient history and mythology of Hindostan.

The last of those celebrated antiquaries mentioned above, M. D'Ancarville, decidedly corroborates what I have before remarked on the antient worship of stones, gradually improving in form and grace, from the rude block adored in Scythia, as the representation of Deity, to the polished and elegant statues of Greece;—Greece, which, he observes, added nothing but beauty to the idea of the Deity, entertained by those who conceived his majesty and attributes to be most properly represented by gigantic sculptures and massy symbols. The commencing of his laborious investigation by *medals*, rather than by *designs*, was a step equally novel and judicious, since the engraved tablet of brass and copper, as I have in my preface observed, with respect to those dug up in India, bids fair to remain, when the sculptured

tured stone shall have crumbled into dust, and the tints of the most glowing picture shall have been totally obliterated. Antient coins not only preserve impressed the figures under which the Pagan gods were worshipped, but in their very formation are emblematical of those figures. According to Plutarch, he remarks, that the most antient Greek coins are of an *obeliscal* form, and intended to imitate the solar ray; they represent javelins, or, to use his own words, *les bélemnites*, commonly called the *thunder-stone*, of which javelins were antiently made. Of coins, bearing this obeliscal form, there is great variety exhibited in his first volume; but it was not so much my intention to mark this, though a circumstance extremely curious, as the succeeding observation. M. D'Ancarville asserts, that the *bélemnite* coins, which represent the thunder, that is, the power of the Almighty, and, consequently, the *Deity by his symbol*, are often found surrounded by the tamara-leaf, to signify that thunder is engendered in the region of clouds created by the water, near which the tamara constantly grows. For the proof of this assertion, he refers us to the valuable collection of Mr Charles Townley, in which the SACRED FIRE, on an antient cande-

 labre

labre of white marble, is represented as surrounded by a tamara-leaf.* Now, the plant of the tamara is the same with the NELUMBO of Linnæus. It is an aquatic plant, of the genus of the nymphæa, and, if I may judge from a print of it in Kæmpfer,† not dissimilar from the LOTOS, on which Brahma and Osiris float upon the chaos. The candelabre of Mr Townley, therefore, appears at once to resolve the whole mystery; for, since we have repeatedly observed, from Plutarch, that Osiris is the sun; and since Sir William Jones informs us, that the names of Brahma, Veeshnu, and Seeva, coalesce, and form the mystical word OM, a word which in the antient Sanscreet character signifies neither more nor less than the SOLAR FIRE; the consequence is, that the antient Egyptians and Indians adored the same deity, under two different appellations; that deity which I have proved was so universally worshipped in Persia, and throughout Asia, THE SUN.

* See M. D'Ancarville's Récherches sur l'Origine et les Progrès des Arts de la Grèce, tom. i. p. 6, edit. 4to, à Londres, 1785.

† See Kempfer's Hist. of Japan, vol. ii. and plate 37. The reader, who possesses and will turn to Kæmpfer's curious book, will there see the great god of Japan, with innumerable arms, all adorned with various symbols, seated upon the TAMARA.

As

As Osiris and Brahma thus nearly resemble each other, at least in the paintings and sculptures of the East, so, if we examine the character and attributes of SEEVA, the destroying power of this country, his functions exhibit too close a parallel to those of the TYPHON, or evil genius, of Egypt, to permit us to hesitate one moment in pronouncing that they originally sprang from one central and common source.

During the whole of our progressive survey of the *caverns of Upper Egypt*, and the mythological sculptures illustrative of the antient worship of that country, increasing evidence seems to have arisen, that they were originally invented by the same ingenious race and fabricated by the same skilful hands. Travellers, who have visited Egypt in periods far more recent than those in which the above-cited authors journeyed thither, confirm the truth of their relation, in regard both to the number and extent of the excavations, the beauty of the sculptures, and their similitude to those carved in the *caverns of India*. The final result, therefore, of this extended investigation is, that, in the remotest periods, there has existed a most intimate connection between the two nations, and that colonies, emigrating from Egypt to India, or from India

to

to Egypt, transported their deities into the country in which they respectively took up their abode. But, as the Brahmin, if he quit his native shore, violates the precepts of his religion, of the two hypotheses, *that* is the more probable which assigns the fabrication of them to the enterprising, the daring, Cuthites, the ancestors of the race of Mizraim. When we farther consider, that some of these travellers, more intimately exploring the Egyptian caverns, and more minutely examining the sculptures with which they are adorned, have positively asserted, that they discovered among them the figures of the gods* JAGANAUT, GANEES, and VEESHNU, we can hardly refuse our assent to an opinion supported by such strong evidence. "Opposite Miniah," says M. Savary in his thirteenth letter on Egypt, "is the village of Gerabia; and, farther up, that of Saonadi. Here the grottoes of the Thebais begin, famous for the austerity of the anchorets, who retired hither during the primitive ages of Christianity. They extend for twenty leagues, as far as facing Manfelout, and were excavated by the antient

* These, in particular, are the sentiments of M. CHEVALIER, many years governor of CHANDERNAGORE. See Savary's Letters, vol. ii. p. 6.

Egyptians.

Egyptians. The hieroglyphics, found in them, attest their antiquity." To those who are decidedly of opinion that the Indians are descended from HAM, by RAMA, the son of CUSH, the pointed similitude in these and innumerable other instances, between them and the Egyptians, will appear by no means surprising; but how far that opinion may be probable is a subject which in the ensuing history will be considered at some extent.

Other writers, indulging a still wider scope of conjecture, have traced to Ethiopia, that country of eternal rock, the original fabricators of this kind of cavern-temple. Their opinion is founded upon the description which Ludolphus* gives of the early and flourishing state of architecture in that country, evident in the vast ruins of the antient capital of AXUMA, and of many magnificent temples cut out of the live rock. Indeed, in confirmation of the opinion, that religious ceremonies in Ethiopia, at no very remote period, were performed in caverns. I may observe, that, in an edition of that author now lying before me, there is a very curious engraving on the lid of a coffin, "dug up," says Ludolph, "in a Christian church-yard, near the high-way called *Priscillas*," which represents the partici-

* Ludolphus's Hist. Ethiop. p. 170, edit. 1682.

pation

pation of the holy communion, by some early Christian converts, in the dark recess of a sacred grotto. A remark of Mr Hunter may also with more propriety be noted here than it could have been before; that many circumstances would induce us to suppose the Indian caverns to have been constructed by a very different race of men from those who at this day inhabit the country. The reasons, which that gentleman assigns for holding this opinion, are founded upon the natural indolence that distinguishes the present inhabitants, apparently incapacitating them for works of such enormous labour, and upon their general ignorance of that graceful elegance of form and proportion of feature which constitute the principal beauty of sculpture, and which, in so remarkable a manner distinguish the majority of the figures just described. "But, farther, it is natural to suppose that those artists would take the model of their work from among themselves; these figures, however, are very far from resembling the present race of Indians. The general form of the body is more robust and muscular; but the most remarkable difference lies in the countenance, *which is broad aad full*; *the nose flat*; *the lips, particularly the under-lip, remarkably thick*; and the whole combination of

of features of a drowsy appearance, very unlike that acute and sprightly look which distinguishes the natives of Hindostan."*

Since both the Egyptians and Ethiopians were the undoubted descendants of Ham, as possibly might be the Hindoos; and, consequently, since all must be supposed to have been infected with the original idolatry of Chaldæa, that primeval country where their ancestors so long resided; I shall again present the reader with an extract from the same prophet whom I cited in a former page, in elucidation of the superstitious rites practised in the mystic cell of Egypt, and of the sculptures pourtrayed on the walls, both of those cells and the caves of India. Whoever attentively considers what, from various authors, and some of such unimpeachable veracity as Niebuhr, Hunter, and Perron, has been before related, concerning the splendid *regal* ornaments that decorate the *head* and *neck*; the *zones*, jewelled or serpentine, that gird round the *waist* of the Indian statues; whoever, in India, has seen the profusion of vermilion or saffron with which, according to his cast, the devout Hindoo, at the performance of his sacred JUGGEN, marks both his own forehead and that of the deity he adores, must agree

* Archæologia, vol. vii, p. 301.

with

with me, that no allusion to those ornaments can be apparently more direct, and no description of the images themselves more accurate, than the following in Ezekiel. Under the character of ABOLIBAH, an abandoned prostitute, does JEHOVAH thus parabolically stigmatise the idolatrous devotion of the apostate Judah. — *She doated upon the Assyrians, her neighbours; captains and rulers, clothed most gorgeously. — And, when she saw men pourtrayed upon the walls, the images of the Chaldeans pourtrayed with vermilion, girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity; then, as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doated upon them, and sent messengers unto them unto Chaldea.* And, again, towards the close of the same chapter, it is said :— "*Moreover this they have done unto me:* WHEN THEY HAD SLAIN THEIR CHILDREN TO THEIR IDOLS; *then they came, the same day, unto my sanctuary to profane it. — And, farthermore, ye have sent for men to come from far, unto whom a messenger was sent; and, lo! they came, for whom* THOU DIDST WASH THYSELF, (that is, perform ablutions,) PAINTEDST THINE EYES, AND DECKEDST THYSELF WITH ORNAMENTS. *And sattest upon a stately bed, with*

with a TABLE (that is, an altar) PREPARED BEFORE IT, WHEREUPON THOU HAST SET MINE INCENSE AND MINE OIL. *And a voice of a multitude, being at ease, was with her, and with the men of the common sort were brought Sabians* * (that is, worshippers of the planets) *from the wilderness* WHICH PUT BRACELETS UPON THEIR HANDS, AND BEAUTIFUL CROWNS UPON THEIR HEADS." †

We have now travelled through the caverns of the Thebais, those most antient and sacred retreats, successively the mansions of the illustrious living and the repositories of the mighty dead: we have explored their inmost recesses, and examined their ornamental sculptures. We have, in the course of our progress, purposely omitted to take any very particular notice of those numerous and superb structures in their neighbourhood, whose height and majesty, even in ruins, awe the astonished spectator, because it is our intention to devote a future chapter of this work entirely to the consideration of that stupendous species of massy architecture and hieroglyphic decoration, which alike distinguish antient

* The term SABIAN is derived from SABA, a host: that is, THE HOST OF HEAVEN.

† Ezekiel, chap. xxiii. ver. 14, 15.

Egypt

Egypt and antient India. The Greeks, who possessed no quarries in such abundance, and had a more correct taste, in this walk of science alone rejected the model of their masters.

This survey finished, the only remaining subject of investigation is, by what channel the Greeks arrived at so intimate a knowledge of the mythology of India, as their paintings, their emblematical sculptures, and their sacred fables, for the most part borrowed from that country, prove them to have acquired? Was it by means of the commercial intercouse which was opened with the latter country by the conquests of Alexander, and carried on under the government of the Ptolemies, his successors, in Egypt? That period is surely too late in the annals of time, since the vast and complicated system of the Greek mythology was formed, and vigorously flourished, previously to the invasion of Alexander. We must search for the origin of the connection, as well as the source of this analogy, in æras far more remote, even at that distant period when the philosophers and theologists of Greece successively resorted to the colleges of Upper Egypt, and imbibed the principles of wisdom and science at its *supposed* fountain-head, amidst the gloom and solitude

solitude of those sacred caverns which Pocock and Norden have so accurately described.

That, even at this distant period, their acquaintance with the literature and mythology of the Higher Asia did by no means *commence,* though the result of their knowledge might be then first formed into a regular system, will hereafter be made clear to the reader in a future chapter upon the pure original theology of Asia and the Oriental Triads of Deity; since the Phœnician Taut and the Thracian Orpheus, whose respective systems will be extensively considered, and both of whom flourished before the Trojan war, doubtless laid the foundation-stone of the fabric of Grecian science and theology. Thales, however, being universally considered as the father of the Grecian philosophy, it will be sufficient, in this place, to trace the vestigia of that venerable sage in his expedition to Egypt. Our historical review of the doctrines and travels of Pythagoras and Plato, in which the preceding assertions will be more amply verified, must be reserved for a future portion of this work.

This first and wisest of the renowned Σοφοι of Greece was born at Miletus, and flourished at the beginning of the sixth century before Christ, and consequently near three

 hundred

hundred years previous to the irruption of the Macedonians into India. From the circumstance of his having invented the constellation of the Little Bear, some antient authors, and among them Hyginus and Suidas,* supposed Thales to have been a Phœnician, but the fact itself of his having first formed into a constellation the stars of the Ursa Minor is exceedingly doubtful, since the Phœnician navigators, in their daring expeditions to the most distant regions of the globe, during ages far anterior to that of Thales, could scarcely have performed those remote voyages without the help of the guiding ray, shed by the pole-star, from the very centre of the Arctic circle. Its name of Cynosura is undoubtedly Grecian, being compounded of κυνος and ουρα, *the tail of a dog*; but its more antient name was Phœnice, which immediately points to its inventors, the old Phœnicians. All that can be allowed is, that he brought this asterism from Phœnicia, whither it is acknowledged he travelled, into Greece. The expedition of Thales into Phœnicia, according to Laertius,† his geo-

* See Suidas in voce Thales, and Hyginus in Astronom. lib. ii. p. 126

† Diogenes Laertius in Vita Thalis, p. 58.

grapher,

grapher, took place at an early period of his life; it was in a more advanced season of it that he visited the sages of the great Diospolis, or Thebes. At that period, the three grand colleges of Egyptian learning, that of Heliopolis, that of Memphis, and that of Thebes, flourished in the zenith of their glory under the patronage of Amasis, a prince renowned for equity and wisdom. As yet the frantic Cambyses had not poured desolation over the fertile valley of Egypt, slaughtered her priests, or burned her temples. This calamitous event, so fatal to the power and the sciences of Egypt, took place under the succeeding reign of Psammenitus, his son and successor, who was himself the victim of the fury of that sanguinary conqueror. Those colleges Thales successively visited; as did Pythagoras afterwards, but under less auspicious circumstances, the latter being taken prisoner by Cambyses and sent captive to Babylon. It was happy for science, and appears like the hand of that all-wise Providence which directs, unseen, the affairs of mortals, which exalts and puts down empires, and permits the ray of science to beam alternately on every country of the earth, that these wise and pious men should have gone to Egypt, in quest of knowledge, at the very

 juncture

juncture when its divine light was about to be extinguished for ever in that devoted country, and should have snatched a torch from the altars of the muses in Egypt, to kindle a brighter and purer flame on their rising altars in Greece.

Thales was received into high favour and much admired by king Amasis. Having been instructed by the priests of Memphis in the principles of geometry, a science in which they excelled, he, at that prince's desire, measured the altitude of the pyramids by their shadow.* When he returned to Greece, he very much improved that science, instructed Pythagoras in it, and is supposed to have invented many of the propositions in Euclid. Under the Heliopolitan priests, who, as may be supposed of priests officiating in *the city of the sun*, were more addicted to astronomy, he perfected those astronomical studies which he had commenced in Phœnicia, and afterwards taught that science to his countrymen, as yet inexperienced in its wonderful arcana. Thales, if the accounts that have come down to us may be credited, which the learned Mr Côstard is very much inclined to doubt,† not only first found out the true

* Plutarch in Symposiac. p. 36.

† See his Letters on the Rise of Astronomy, p. 95.

length

length of the solar year, but predicted an eclipse of the sun, which precisely came to pass at the time predicted, and put an end to the five years war carried on between the Lydians and Medes, who, thinking the gods displeased by the sudden turning of day into night, terminated their difference by a lasting peace.* The determination of the length of the year, and the prediction of this famous eclipse, could not, however, have been effected without a mathematical apparatus and astronomical tables, which cannot be supposed to have existed, in Greece, in that infant stage of the science. Thales, therefore, undoubtedly borrowed his information, in both these respects, from the Egyptian priests, who we know, from the most authentic writers of antiquity, could calculate eclipses, and who had long before engraved the number of the days of the reformed year upon the great golden circle that adorned the tomb of Osymandes. But the superb sepulchre of Osymandes was at Thebes, and, therefore, we must now finally follow the steps of our philosopher, during his anxious wanderings in quest of truth and science, to those caverns of the Upper Egypt which we have so lately explored.

* Herodoti, lib. i. p. 46.

Philosophers, it has been already observed, ever loved the silence of groves and the solitude of caves. While Monarchy swayed the sceptre in Thebes, and Luxury indulged her bloated progeny in that celebrated metropolis with all the rarities of the East, Science had taken up her abode in the rocky recesses adjoining, and roots and water alone composed the frugal banquet of the sages who tenanted the caverns that lined the borders of the Nile. Pythagoras himself, on his return to Samos, after a residence of two-and-twenty years in Egypt, though he erected a school for the public study of philosophy within the city, yet resided without the city in a cavern, where he delivered his more mystical and profound discourses; and in like manner the more deep and recondite sciences of Egypt were alone taught, by her sequestered sacerdotal tribe, in the gloomy adyta and subterraneous grottoes of the Thebais.

In attempting thus to trace the footsteps of the first and wisest of the Greeks, during ages involved in deep historical obscurity, and to prove that Thales really did derive from the sages of Egypt the great outlines both of his theology and philosophy, we ought by no means to omit mentioning a few strong collateral circumstances which immediately tend

to

to establish our hypothesis. The Egyptians were at that time devoted to hieroglyphics and to a mythological cast of sentiment. The history both of their Dii Majores and Minores was composed of a series of physical fables and ingenious allegories, allusive to the celestial phænomena; and can it, therefore, excite wonder that Greece, whose earliest philosophers were pupils of the Egyptian sages, should pursue the same course of fabling and allegorising, surpassing their masters as well in the boldness as in the elegance of their romantic fictions? The genii which presided in the signs of the Egyptian zodiac are, for the most part, the deities of Greece. In the Grecian Apollo, who does not trace the Osiris of Egypt? and, in their winged Mercury, the Hermes of that country, in which *wings* were so usual a symbol, that Scripture itself denominates it *the land shadowing with wings?** But, in fact, the Egyptian Osiris is the Eswara of India, and Hermes is no other than the celebrated Indian deity Bhood, the offspring of Soma, the moon, and the nymph Rohihi, the bright star in the Bull's head personified; that is, allegory apart, this personage was born when those orbs were in

* Isaiah, chap. xviii. ver. 1.

conjunction. The stars, which form the brilliant cluster called the Pleiades, were respectively personified, in Sanscreet history, by as many beautiful nymphs, the supposed daughters of a renowned rajah, long before the Grecian mythology was formed, and it is but just to allow to the older nation the prior claim of invention. The hydra, also, which the Grecian Hercules slew, that is, which the sun, rising in the constellation Hercules, with a brighter beam obscured the light of, has been known of old in those writings by the name of Seshanaga, or King of Serpents. He rules over the inferior hemisphere; for, he sets when the sun rises; and he possesses, like his Grecian copy, numerous heads, each head adorned with a flaming gem, by which they mean the stars that compose it. From India, however, the Greeks did not directly obtain this curious piece of mythology; for, Seshanaga first became the Egyptian Typhon, (a word derived from *tuphon*, deluge, like hydra from *υδωρ*, *water,)* that malignant Typhon, the Scorpion of their zodiac, whom Horus, the son of Osiris, that is *light*, pierced through and through with innumerable arrows. I shall not, for the present, pursue these details of astronomical mythology, since they will necessarily occupy a large portion

portion of the early pages of the intended history; but hasten to the conclusion of this prolonged chapter, by stating, as far as the glimmering light reflected from antient Grecian records will permit, what other doctrines of a theological and philosophical kind prevailed in Egypt, and were thence imported into Greece during the reign of Amasis.

Two very strong circumstances may be adduced in proof that the Egyptians, at the period of our philosopher's visit, although the superb temples of Luxore were already erected, had not wholly relinquished their attachment to rock-built temples and cavern-devotion; for, that monarch himself, according to Herodotus,* had caused to be hewn out of the solid rock a vast chapel, consisting of one entire stone, in the excavation and finishing of which 2000 chosen masons were employed for three whole years; and this immense structure was afterwards conveyed down the Nile, from the city of Elephantis, to Sais, a distance of twenty days sail, where it was placed in the vestibule of the venerated temple of Minerva. The author also records many other erections of Amasis, all in the massy colossal style of architecture; and, what is very

* Herodotus, lib. ii. p. 178, edit. Steph.

much

much to our present purpose, informs us, that, behind the aforesaid temple of Minerva, certain sepulchral vaults or shrines were fabricated for the celebration of rites too aweful to be named by him; that, close adjoining, there were columns; probably of Phallic designation, for, the symbol of Osiris as well as of Seeva, in his generative capacity, was a column of vast height and magnitude; and that there was also an extensive lake, of an orbicular form, lined with stone, intended, doubtless, for the purpose of purification, like the tanks of India. He concludes this important information, so direct and decisive, by expressly declaring, that in this lake the priests performed those solemn nocturnal shews, *which the Egyptians call* MYSTERIES, *τα χαλεισσι μυςηρια Αιγυπτιοι*.* It was to revenge an affront offered by Amasis to Cambyses, who had demanded his daughter in marriage, but on whom the former had imposed the daughter of his predecessor Apries for his own, that the Persian monarch invaded Egypt, and, notwithstanding his temporary subversion both of its civil and religious government, evident testimony has, in the preceding pages, been exhibited of the resumption of cavern-worship

* Herodotus, lib. ii. p. 179, edit. Steph.

after

after his departure, in the plate representing a solar sacrifice, sculptured on a rock in the Thebais, in which the symbols of the Egyptian and Persian devotion are visibly blended.

While Thales sojourned in the caverns of the Thebais, he probably learned from the Egyptian seers that distinguishing axiom of the Ionic philosophy, *aquam esse initium rerum*, or, THAT WATER IS THE PRINCIPLE OF ALL THINGS;* a doctrine so remarkably consonant to the Mosaic and Brahmin philosophy, as well as to that observation of Homer, which he had probably borrowed from the Orphic school, 'Ωκεανος οσπερ γενεσις παντας τετυκται, or, "the Ocean is the great source of the generation of all things." Hence flowed all the respect, and even veneration, paid in Eastern climes to the LOTOS, or water-lily, a plant which continually keeps its expanded petals floating above the surface of the waters, to whatever height they rise; and hence the frequent use of that allegorical symbol in the decoration of the temples of Egypt and Greece. In those rocky retreats, also, so well calculated for profound meditation on the nature and attributes of God, he learned that other sublime axiom ascribed to him by Clemens Alexandri-

* Cicero de Nat. Deorum, lib. i. cap. 10.

nus:

nus: for, this author affirms, that, "on its being demanded of Thales, *what God was?* he answered, *that which has neither beginning nor end;*"* doubtless alluding to that most antient symbol, the *orb*, or *circle*, by which it will hereafter be more particularly proved the Egyptians designated the Deity. Thus, also, the Indians, in an antient shastah, defining the Supreme Being, asserted, that "God was like a perfect sphere, without beginning and without end."† It should, however, be remarked, in honour of Thales, that, when he asserted that water was the principle of all things, he meant a subordinate and physical principle; for, according to Cicero, he added *Deum esse eam mentem quæ ex aqua cuncta fingeret*; or, that God was the demiurgic mind which formed all things out of water.‡ On another occasion he asserted, that God was πρεσβυτατον παντων, *the oldest of all things*; and that the world was governed by the strong power of Necessity, meaning no blind necessity, but the immutable decrees of his Providence. §

* Vide Stromata, p. 5.

† Holwell's Interesting Historical Events, part ii. p. 31.

‡ De Nat. Deorum in loco citato.

§ See Diogenes Laertius in Vita Thalis, p. 21.

Cicero,

Cicero, elsewhere, mentions Thales as the first Grecian who made any inquiry into these abstruse metaphysical subjects; and, finally, Herodotus, who, by his own confession, had visited the priests of both Heliopolis and Thebes, appears to me to establish the point of the Grecian theology having been brought out of Egypt, by declaring, that, "his nation acknowledged to have received the names of their gods from that country;" * for, with those names they doubtless received their wonderful history and mysterious rites; the nefarious orgies of the phallica, celebrated at Athens, which are only a mutilated copy of the Indian worship of the lingam; and the sacred pomp of their Osiris and Isis, revived in the Eleusinian mysteries, whose name and rites, however, evince them to be no other than the Eswara and Isa, that is, the active and passive principles in nature personified, of the Brahmin mythologists.

That *the immortality of the soul* formed a part of the creed of the Indians and Egyptians has been already proved; and Thales, having imbibed their sentiments on this head, carried this doctrine, probably before Pherecydes, into the schools of Greece. He was

* Herodot. lib. ii. p. 80, idem edit.

accustomed

accustomed to denominate the soul not only αυτοκινητον, as *having within itself the principle of motion,* but also κινητικον, as *possessing the faculty of giving motion to other objects*; and Laertius informs us, he went so far as to assert, that the loadstone was endowed with a soul, because it possessed the power of attracting iron.* In fact, the various vicissitudes which that soul endured during its terrestrial sojourning, the several stages and degrees of sorrow and suffering through which it toiled in its ascent to the SUPREME GOOD, together with certain physical phænomena connected with the history of the allegorical deities of India and Egypt, formed the basis of all the mysteries of Africa and Asia. The stupendous scenes which were transacting around, as well in the natural as the moral world, the exploring eye of philosophy contemplated with awe and wonder; and, to impress them forcibly on the minds of their pupils, the hoary sages of antiquity caused to be acted over again, in vast subterraneous theatres, the mighty drama of life and of nature. A desire to represent these with correctness and energy was the occasion of giving their dark winding avenues to the holy cavern of Elephanta, and

* Diogenes Laertius in Vita Thalis.

of

of scooping out the deep recesses of the subterraneous labyrinths of the Thebais. The profound and mystic exhibitions to which Thales and his pupil Pythagoras were witnessess in those rocky shrines; the wonderful symbols which they there beheld exalted before the view of the initiated; and the hallowed symphonies, unutterable by profane lips, which they there heard recited; had penetrated their inmost souls with awe and holy reverence: the remembrance of them was never to be obliterated from their hearts, and they, therefore, carried away and engrafted the theological code and sacred pomps of Egypt upon the infant religion and dawning mythology of Greece. The festival ceremonies and religious dogmas of the two nations soon became inseparably, inextricably, blended; and the mysteries of Greece, though a country which had no caverns like those of India and Thebes, bore, in succeeding ages, all the stamp and distinguishing features of the antient cavern-worship of Asia; the long procession of priests, bearing sacred symbols, and of fear-struck candidates, conducted during the awful process of initiation through dreary adyta and winding glooms; the whole temple being, at one time, veiled in the deepest midnight darkness, and, at another, flaming with the

the brightest splendors of the noon-day sun; the shriek of anguish and the shout of transport alternately resounding as struggling virtûe suffered or was triumphant. Isis, converted into Ceres, again heard her cymbals echo through the vault of Eleusis; while Seeva, indignant, saw the insignia and worship of the deity of Benares usurped by the Athenian Bacchus.

END OF VOLUME THE SECOND.



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